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THE HEIRESS
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KILORGAN



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THE
HEIRESS OF KILORGAN;

OR,
EVENINGS WITH THE OLD GERALDINES.

BY MRS J. SADLIER,

**AUTHORESS OF "BLAKES AND FLANAGANS;" "WILLIE BURKE;" "NEW
LIGHTS;" "THE CONFEDERATE CHIEFTAINS;" "ELINOR PRESTON;"
"BESSY CONWAY;" "THE CONFESSIONS OF AN APOSTATE;" "CON
O'BEGAN;" "OLD AND NEW;" "THE HERMIT OF THE
ROCK;" "THE OLD HOUSE BY THE BOYNE;"
"AUNT HONOR'S KEEPSAKE," &c., &c.**

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PREFACE.

It is almost superfluous, I think, to write any thing in the shape of a preface for this unpretending volume. The object of the work is sufficiently indicated in the course of the narrative, wherein a slight and very simple thread of fiction connects throughout the series of historical sketches, constituting these "Evenings with the Old Geraldines." I know not how it was with my readers, but for me it was a pleasant task to search the archives of Irish history, and draw forth from the mists of "the dark brown years," the half-forgotten heroes of "that more than Irish tribe" who, in the darkest days of Ireland's tribulation, stood by the old race and the old faith, as became Christian men and gallant nobles. For many ages their history was, in weal or woe, closely identified with the history of Ireland, their sway extended over several counties of Leinster and of Munster; they guided the helm of state; they were chosen as arbiters between the contending parties, and, as it were, held the balance of power in the land; their influence extended to the old and new Irish; they were the great dominant race during the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and even sixteenth centuries. But it is not on the historic page alone that the fame of the Geraldines is recorded: in the traditionary lore of the people they hold a first place (the Desmonds especially), and the tale of their glory and power is written in mournful characters in the typography of Leinster and South Munster, where the mouldering remains of their castles are met along the rivers, on the beetling cliffs, and rock-bound islets of the dear old land. But they have a nobler record than all of this: the scenes of their departed glory are thickly strewn with the ruins of the stately abbeyes, and gorgeous shrines

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(RECAP)

they built and endowed in honor of God, the Virgin Mother and the Saints. Down to the period of the Reformation, and for years after, till the time of Gerald the eleventh Earl of Kildare, the Geraldines were all great patrons of the Religious Orders, much given to the building of churches and convents and monasteries, and in many a ruined aisle in the loveliest scenes of Ireland, the traveller still beholds the mouldering tomb of some lord or lady of the Geraldines on which may still be traced in Latin the touching "Pray for the souls of Thomas, or Maurice, or Gerald Fitzgerald, Baron of Offaly, or Earl of Kildare, or Earl of Desmond, (as the case may be.) and his wife Margaret, or Joan, or Alice, or Juliana,—who built this Abbey,—or Church,—in honor of God and the Blessed Virgin Mary, for their souls' eternal welfare."

This fact and the heroic constancy and fidelity of the Desmond branch to the Faith, after the Reformation, have induced me to transfer to paper some few of my historical researches with regard to this great Norman-Irish house. Of the Geraldines generally it has frequently been said that they attained an extent of power and ruled with a magnificence surpassing that of any house, less than royal, in Western Europe. Of the Desmond branch, it is recorded that they were the Maccabees of Ireland, a race of martyr-nobles, especially in the later periods of their long history: says an Irish chronicler, bewailing their fall: "For a hundred and fifty years had this noble tree extended its branches over the four provinces of Ireland; no less than fifty lords and barons paid them tribute, and was ever ready to march under their banners. Besides the Palatinate of Kerry, the country, for a hundred and twenty miles in length and fifty in breadth, was theirs. The people paid submission to them throughout all their holdings; they had, moreover, one hundred castles and strongholds, numerous seaports, lands that were charming to the eye, and rich in fruits, the mountains were theirs, together with the woods, theirs were the rocky coasts, and the sweet blue lakes. . . . Yea, this fairest of lands did they win by the sword, and govern by their laws; loved by their own, dreaded by their enemies, they were the

delight of princes and patrons of gifted youth. Oh, but they were a great and glorious race! Alas! alas. the mighty tree was doomed to perish, when scathed by the lightning of England's hate!"

The vast power of the later Desmonds was all thrown into the scale on behalf of the persecuted Catholic people, and it was their unconquerable fidelity to the cause of religion that drew down upon these palatines of the South the deadly vengeance of Elizabeth Tudor, and William Cecil. When they fell, the Catholic cause fell, too, nor rose again till Hugh O'Neill unfurled the banner of the Bloody Hand in proud defiance over the walls of Dungannon.

It is for this that we love the memory of the Geraldines, especially those of Desmond, and next to visiting the scenes of their old renown, and, the hallowed spots where, in consecrated earth, their bodies await the final Resurrection, which it may never be given us to do, this poor attempt at making their names and deeds and sufferings more familiar than we shame to say it is, to the Catholic children of Ireland, affords us a mournful but sincere pleasure.

The sources from which we have gathered the historical portion of our narrative were chiefly the "Viceroys of Dublin" by Gilbert, the "Earls of Kildare" by the present Marquis of Kildare, heir to the Dukedom of Leinster, O'Daly's "Geraldines," translated from the Irish by the Rev. C. Meehan, Wills' "Illustrious and Distinguished Irishmen," Smith's "Ireland, Historical and Statistical," Moore's, McGee's, Leland's, and McGeoghegan's Histories of Ireland, and the "Annals of the Four Masters." It was no light task to cull from all these works, and compress into the small limits of such a work as this, together with a story to connect the different parts,—the more important events connected with the strangely-varied career of the Geraldines, combining with the strictly historical, the traditional and romantic annals of the house, preserved in the songs and legends of a people who have never ceased to love and honor the memory of their former protectors, and in whose aspirations for the

future glory of their country the dead Desmonds are still associated, through the wild medium of that superstition which necessarily belongs to the simple peasantry of a poetical and imaginative people. If I have even interested a few of my young readers in the name and fame of "the old Geraldines," my labor is not in vain. It was, truly, a labor of love.

M. A. SADLER.

THE
HEIRESS OF KILORGAN;
OR,
EVENINGS WITH THE OLD GERALDINES.

CHAPTER I.

It was a mild gray evening in mid-autumn, some eight years ago, when I found myself standing at the iron gate which separated from the high road a grass-grown avenue, winding away amongst green knolls, in the shade of tall nodding elms and stately sycamores, now half stripped of their seared and withered foliage. I had been journeying for miles through the hill country which, on almost every side, bounds the vast plain constituting the major part of the fair and fertile county of Limerick. The morning had found me afloat on the Shannon's broad breast, in a noble steamer, sailing upwards from Limerick City; the mid-hours of day were no less pleasantly spent in a small sail-boat on the pastoral waters of the Maig, gliding on between banks of rare and varied beauty, the evening hour found me, as I have said, after a

lonely journey through the romantic hills which form, as it were, the skirts of the Mugharamaich Mountains,—leaning on the gate which barred the entrance to a shady and, apparently, unfrequented avenue, leading I knew not well whither, though inclined to hope that it terminated in the place which I had crossed land and sea to reach.

I had been directed, with the eager politeness of Irish peasants, to just such a gate, under just such trees, with high hills all around; as the entrance to Kilorgan, by which name I choose to designate the place of my destination. But house or homestead saw I none, as I stopped to take a survey, half admiring, half curious, of the scene which presented itself within the narrow limits of the prospect. The hills rose up around in varied size and form, like sentinels guarding a place of strength; some were wooded to their summits, others covered with herbage, whereon sheep and kine were grazing, while a few goats browsed on the scant herbage that grew in patches amongst some rocky heights seen at no great distance through an opening in the overhanging hills. The deep valley in which I stood,—and into which a bridle-road, winding round the base of a hill, had conducted me from the main road,—was thickly studded with the trees I have mentioned, trees of ancient growth, and the broad avenue that swept through the undulations of the soil, disappearing abruptly from the view round the base of a mound or hillock, though evidently intended as a carriage-way, was so

almost entirely overgrown with grass that, but for the path worn by pedestrians under the trees at either side, it would have seemed as though the foot of man or beast seldom passed that way. An extensive colony of rooks appeared to have made the place their home, judging from the many-voiced chorus of their monotonous song that rose at intervals from every tree-top.

The place and the time were favorable to meditation, but I was not in the humor for devoting time to thought or fancy; I had eaten little since the morning meal on board the Shannon steamer, and being neither in love nor over much given to flights of fancy, I soon tired of leaning on the gate, looking at the hills and the trees, thinking of nothing in particular, and was about to open the gate and go up the avenue in quest of the house which I supposed might be found amongst those ancient trees, when the blithe whistle of a laborer, homeward bound, reached my ear, and a step sounded on the gravelled road behind me. Turning quickly, I saw a young peasant with a spade over his shoulder, returning probably from his day's labor. He stopped on seeing me, with a civil "God save you, sir!"—a salutation new and strange to me, and I hastened to avail myself of the opportunity to obtain some information.

"Can you tell me, friend, if this is Kilorgan?"

"Faith, an' it is then, the very place, an' a fine ould ancient place it is, too; more's the pity it isn't what it used to be." And the blithe, cheery look left the

young man's face as he cast a saddened glance over the surrounding objects.

"There is a house somewhere about these grounds, is there not?" I asked.

"A house!" he repeated in a tone of contempt which surprised me not a little; "a house! an' is that all you know about it? It's a stranger you must be in these parts or you wouldn't ax the question. To be sure there's a house, an' a grand house, too——"

"I *am* a stranger," I replied, "and you will do me a favor by telling me where I am to find the house you speak of."

"Oh! then, it's aisy found, your honor!" and the man touched his hat with the instinctive respect of the Irish peasantry for strangers. "You have only to folly that avenue you see there, and it'll bring you right straight to the big house."

"Right straight!" I repeated to myself, glancing at the serpentine road before me with some amusement, and thinking of poor Hood's

"Straight down the crooked lane,
And all round the square."

I thanked the man, however, for his information, and supposing him to have gone on his way, was in the act of raising the ponderous latch that secured the gate when I heard his voice again

"If it's goin' to see the young mistress you are, sir, I'm thinkin' you'll not find her within, but you can ask for the ould madam or his honor. They're seldom out, especially the ould madam."

Nodding my thanks, I opened the gate and walked rapidly along the avenue, wondering as I went who and what the personages referred to might be; I had somehow entertained the idea that the former owners of the place had all died out, and that the family residing in it were a sort of caretakers, employed to keep the house from total decay.

I had followed the windings of the avenue for but a hundred yards or so, when I found myself full in front of the old manor-house, and was beginning to take a general survey of the premises, when the loud, fierce barking of a dog broke the silence, and a large, shaggy-looking animal of that species bounded forward, evidently with no amicable dispositions towards myself.

I raised my stick to defend myself, for the dog's appearance was formidable, but just then a clear, ringing voice called out—"Down, Bran! down!" and immediately the animal slunk away, and crouched submissively at the feet of a young female who suddenly made her appearance round a corner of the old mansion. There was nothing in her appearance to distinguish her from the women of the country; a large woollen shawl was carelessly wrapped around her, and a close-fitting straw bonnet of the coarsest texture would have partially concealed her face even in a clearer light than that of the autumnal eve.

"Don't be afraid, sir!" said the damsel, "the dog's bark is worse than his bite."

Not much relishing the half saucy, half encourag

ing tone in which this was said, I contemptuously passed it over and asked :

"Do you know, young woman, if I can be accommodated here for the night?"

Something that sounded like a low musical laugh came from under the cottage bonnet, as the wearer thereof made answer :

"As you seem to be a stranger, sir, I'll make bold to say you can. There's always room and to spare in Kilorgan House."

"It is not uninhabited then?"

"Uninhabited! oh, dear, no!" And again I thought that the woman was laughing at me. "The Fitzgeralds of Kilorgan aren't all dead yet. Knock at the door, sir, and see if you can't get in."

"This," thought I, as the damsel tripped away, "must be the waiting-maid of 'the young mistress;' a pretty piece of impudence she is truly!" I was fain to act, however, on her suggestion, and ascending the three or four broad stone steps that led to a small flagged platform or esplanade in front of the hall-door, I knocked with that sort of hesitation which denotes an uncertainty as to the character of one's reception. The sound reverberated hollowly through the interior for some seconds, then died away in what seemed a far distance. Then the heavy door was slowly opened by a somewhat slatternly girl whose fiery red hair and sharp features gave no great promise of amiability.

"Are any of the family in?" I asked, not knowing how else to put the question.

"In, is it? an'to be sure they're in: why wouldn't they?" was the somewhat unpromising answer, saying which the strapping serving-wench, with gown pinned up behind, and quilted under-skirt reaching barely to her ankles, trudged on to a low-arched door at the farther end of a long flagged hall, I following close behind, as I supposed she meant I should. Throwing open the door with a sort of bang, she called out in a voice, which I thought, at the moment, much too loud, but which a glance at the size of the room within fully justified.

"A strange gentleman, ma'am!" Then vanished down another long passage turning off at the end of the principal hall, leaving me uncertain whether to enter the room or not. A voice from within soon re-assured me, and it needed not the polite "walk in, sir!" to make me sensible that a lady spoke, for the tone was that of a well-bred person. I entered at once, but for some moments could see no one, the remoter parts of the spacious apartment being already lost in the thick-coming darkness, whilst the space just before me was made dimly visible by the gray, hazy light from three windows in the opposite wall, arched like the doorway. At either end of the hall, for so it might be called, a wood fire burned on a spacious hearth in a wide open chimney, and full in the red light of one of these, I soon perceived a female figure sitting in a low chair. I was startled

at first by the motionless rigidity of the figure, and the gloom of the apartment, and thought it strange that the owner of so sweet and soft a voice as that I had just heard should so far fail in the courtesy due a visitor as to keep her sitting posture.

I ventured, however, to approach where the lady sat, and then she stood up, a tall, thin, but not ungraceful figure. One glance at her face explained all; she was blind.

"Did you wish to see me, sir?" she asked in a mild and somewhat melancholy voice.

I hesitated a moment before I replied—"I am a stranger, madam, in these parts, and having journeyed on foot for several hours amongst the hills, I feel the want of rest and refreshment."

"Both are at your service here," said the lady with eager politeness. "The stranger is ever welcome at Kilorgan. Pray be seated! I expect my niece every moment. She will do the honors of our poor house."

"Your niece is here," said in a blithe, cheery voice a person whom I had just seen gliding in through a door in the corner of the room behind where the lady sat. The voice somehow sounded familiar, and my surprise was only equalled by my disappointment when in the squat-looking figure which advanced into the circle of light around the fireplace, I recognized the young person who had silenced the dog out of doors. I fancied she smiled as our eyes met, but with only a slight nod of recognition, she addressed her aunt, somewhat abruptly it seemed to me!

"Why, Aunt Ella, how dark it is here! you should have had lights in long ago."

"You forget, my dear, that night and day are alike to me," said the melancholy voice from the chimney-corner.

"And that is true, Aunt Ella, but how *could* I forget?" said the younger lady in a softened tone, as she went herself and lit two candles—tallow dips they were too,—which stood ready in a sort of sconce, or hanging candlestick, on either side the high, old-fashioned mantelpiece.

"There is a gentleman here—a stranger," said the aunt hesitatingly.

"I see him," was the curt reply. Then suddenly addressing me, she said with a smile of peculiar meaning—"So you are in a fair way, are you, of being 'accommodated for the night?'"

"Thanks to this lady's hospitality I am," I replied, endeavoring to repress a smile.

"My niece is mistress here," said the elder lady, very gently.

"Under you, aunt," said the younger, reproachfully, and she looked at her a moment in silence more eloquent than words. Suddenly changing her tone, however, she turned to me with that mocking air which seemed habitual to her—"You see, sir, my aunt and I are joint castellans of this princely dwelling, to which we courteously bid you welcome." She curtsied with the same quizzical air, and I bowed, not

well knowing how else to answer her singular address. She turned and left the room.

"Pray, sir, may we ask your name?" said the blind lady in her bland, soothing voice

Thus reminded of what I should have done before I announced myself—"Edward Evelyn Howard, of Middlesex County, England."

"And I am Miss Fitzgerald," said the lady smiling, "otherwise better known as Aunt Ella."

"And your niece?" I inquired, just as that young lady opened the door by which she had before entered.

"Aunt Ella's niece," said she, speaking for herself, and I thought rather proudly, "is Margaret Fitzgerald—heiress of Kilorgan!" she added suddenly, resuming her usual manner, but with the slightest tinge of bitterness in her tone.

"Heiress of Kilorgan," I involuntarily repeated.

"Yes, heiress of Kilorgan," she repeated, amused, it would seem, by the abstracted tone in which I spoke, "heiress of Kilorgan, with all its appurtenances. A goodly inheritance, surely, as you cannot but see. Well! even heiresses must stoop to look after the vulgar things called eating and drinking," and again she left the room.

"Our retinue is not large, as you may probably have perceived, Mr. Howard," said Miss Fitzgerald with a sad smile, "so my niece is obliged to assist a little in the work of our *ménage*. For me, as you see, I can do little but eat and drink and sit in the chimney corner like a piece of useless furniture."

"Are there no other members of your family residing with you?" I ventured to ask, partly to change a subject which I considered a delicate one, and partly to conceal my emotion, for the touching resignation of the pale, sad, sightless face, the gentle words and gentle voice of my new acquaintance, struck a cord of sympathy in my heart.

"Oh, yes," she answered, "my brother lives with us, that is if we can call it living, for he is a confirmed invalid. We three are the last of all our family, I might almost say of all our race, for we literally are the last representatives of one branch of the Fitzgeralds."

"What! the Geraldines?" I asked in surprise.

"Even so—we are descended from a younger branch of the family tree—a decayed branch," she added with her calm smile.

I was saved the necessity of answering by the re-appearance of the younger lady who came to announce the evening meal, at the same time drawing her aunt's arm within hers.

"Now, Mr. —, Aunt, what's his name?"

"Howard."

"Mr. Howard, we will show you the way to our banquetting-hall," said Miss Margaret, and bowing my acknowledgment, I followed. In a small room adjoining the large hall, the tea-table stood ready with its ample provision of oaten and wheaten cakes, eggs, fresh butter in dainty "prints," and other such country fare, the whole so appetizing that even with-

out so long a fast as I had had, I should have been well prepared to do justice to such "creature comforts." Plain as was the fare, there was no vulgar attempt at apology from either lady, and I was just taking the seat assigned to me by the young hostess, when the door opened and an elderly gentleman made his appearance, who, from his likeness to the elder lady, I judged to be her brother. He started at first on seeing a stranger. "Never mind, Uncle Maurice," said the younger lady, in her frank, off-handed way, "it is only Mr. Howard; an English gentleman who lost his way,—or *did* you lose your way?" she said, turning abruptly to me. "I forget what you told me."

"I did not exactly lose my way," I replied with an involuntary smile, "but passing this way, and seeing no appearance of any house of public entertainment, I took the liberty of putting Irish hospitality to the test."

"Well! that point settled, let me make you acquainted with my uncle. Uncle, this is Mr. Howard, whose account of himself, Norval-like, you have just heard. Mr. Howard, Mr. Maurice Fitzgerald, my uncle."

The gentleman bowed, somewhat stiffly, I thought, as he seated himself at the end of the table opposite his niece; he probably thought that the English gentleman, Mr. Howard, had not given a sufficient account of himself to warrant his introduction to their family circle. He looked, indeed, like a man who would be

choice of his acquaintances, and not over free to communicate with strangers. His features had once been handsome, and his figure tall and commanding, but disease had withered the one, and bowed down the other, so that he looked prematurely old, and at first sight impressed you as one who had not come scatheless from the fiery ordeal of protracted bodily suffering. This impression, however, was soon effaced by further acquaintance, and you found that Maurice Fitzgerald was neither less the gentleman, nor more the misanthrope, for being an invalid, and, at times, a great sufferer. He was, by nature, somewhat reserved and prone to look on strangers with distrust, so long as they were strangers, but when once he came to understand one's character, and felt himself safe in cultivating their acquaintance, none more generous or confiding than he.

All this, as may well be supposed, I discovered at a later period, and by slow degrees, but for that first evening of our acquaintance I rather shrunk from the old gentleman, as I suppose I must call him; and it seemed to me that the feeling was mutual.

As for the niece of this brother and sister, the so-called heiress of Kilorgan, I thought her the least interesting of the three; compared with her blind aunt she seemed common-place, I had almost said vulgar, but vulgar she was not, and never could have been. She was about the middle size, her figure symmetrical enough, and might have been graceful, I thought, had it not been for a superabundance of life, so to say

and a quickness and decision little common in women of her age—for she seemed no more than two or three and twenty. Her hair and complexion were dark, so dark, indeed, that she looked more like a Spaniard or Italian than an Irishwoman. The features, however, were far from being regular, and there was a mocking smile that seemed almost habitual to the eyes and lips that made one almost afraid of this young daughter of the Geraldines.

The style and furniture of the apartments I had seen were all indicative of fallen fortunes; quaint old tables and chairs of a fashion long since forgotten, and almost rickety with age; *buffets* such as no one ever sees now-a-days, massive, dark, and capacious, and, in the room we were now in, one or two portraits faded and dim with age, one representing a knight in armor, with visor raised, the other a fair lady in the dress of a shepherdess, playing on the lute! The one window of the room was high up from the floor, and, in a sort of recess beneath it, was a carved oaken seat large enough to accommodate two or three persons. All was new and strange to me, and I could not resist the temptation of examining every object with a curious eye. It was plain from the house and its arrangements that the owners of the place had never been great or grand, but simply of the class commonly known as the gentry. "No lineal descendants, these," I thought, "of 'the princely Geraldine.'" Still, when I cast my eyes from the bare walls of the apartment to the gentle figure

of the blind lady, and the stately, though drooping form of her brother, albeit that neither wore the "trappings of pride," and were nothing more than decently clad, I was half tempted to change my opinion: there was high blood and gentle breeding unmistakeably visible in each.

Once, while these thoughts were passing through my mind, I chanced to glance towards the younger scion of the Fitzgeralds, and found her watching me with an amused look, as though she were reading my inmost thoughts. I felt my face flush, and with a disagreeable conscious feeling, bent my eyes on the tea-cup before me, nor raised them again till the voice of Mr. Fitzgerald broke the somewhat embarrassing silence.

"I presume you are an artist, Mr. Howard!" was his abrupt observation.

I replied in the negative.

"Travelling for pleasure, then? making a pedestrian tour?"

"Not exactly, as yet," and I smiled; "I *may* explore the romantic solitudes and recesses of your mountains a little later."

"Ah! then, business is your object in visiting Ireland?"

I did not much relish the cool, categorical way in which the old gentleman set about examining me, as it were, and I replied, in a tone as dry and curt as I could well make it:

"Yes, I came to Munster and to your county on

private business," laying a marked emphasis on the word *private*.

"Oh! indeed! and pray does your *private* business lie in this neighborhood?"

"It does."

"Short, but not sweet," said the younger Miss Fitzgerald to her aunt in an audible whisper. "Mr. Howard, another cup of tea?"

"Thank you,—no more."

"Uncle Maurice—ahem!—shall I give you some more tea?"

"No; I have almost broken the few teeth I have on that oaten bread of yours."

"Truly yes, uncle, it reminds one of the cakes Mistress Finn McCoul baked to entertain the Scotch giant who came to fight her good man. Who knows but Sheelah had some invisible warning of Mr. Howard's advent, and put something as hard as Grana's griddle in her bread to try his teeth."

"Nonsense!" muttered the uncle, in a voice meant only for his niece's ear, but it happened to reach mine; "Mr. Howard's advent may turn out no joking matter,—mind my words." He was passing her at the moment, to leave the room. A sudden change was visible on the young lady's face; she glanced uneasily at me, as though some passing doubt had entered her mind. It was but momentary, however, for the next instant she said in her quick, frank way:

"You must not mind my uncle, Mr. Howard! he has some peculiar ways. Aunt, suppose we adjourn

to the parlor,—that is, if you have finished your tea.”

“Yes, my dear, I am ready to go.”

I observed that both ladies crossed themselves devoutly, before and after their meal, and that the old gentleman had done the same.

“You are Catholics, Miss Fitzgerald?” said I, as we returned to the parlor.

“Of course we are,” replied the young lady quickly; “every Fitzgerald ought to be. And you, Mr Howard?”

“I may say as you do—every Howard ought to be. My father was a Catholic.”

“And are not you?”

“My dear Margaret!” said her aunt in a tone of gentle rebuke.

“Yes, aunt, I know you would say that I am almost as inquisitive as Uncle Maurice was just now. Never mind, I will take that liberty with our guest. Are you, or are you not, a Catholic, Mr. Howard?”

“I am trying hard to become one,” I replied smiling; “my father, strangely enough, left my early religious training to my mother, and I grew up a Protestant, but of late years, since the death of both my parents, I have been led to take a different view of things, and after mature deliberation, embraced the faith of the Howards.”

“God be praised!” said the elder lady with pious fervor. The younger said nothing; we were just then entering the great parlor, where we found Mr.

Fitzgerald sitting by the fire opposite his sister's seat, his attenuated form reclining in a large easy chair, and his feet extended on a straw cushion. Aunt Ella placed by her niece in her usual seat, took up her knitting which lay on a small table near her, and the young lady retired, leaving us three to cultivate each other's acquaintance as best we might.



CHAPTER II.

I KNOW not how it happened, but in the course of an hour's conversation, I observed the ice of Mr. Fitzgerald's reserve beginning to thaw. He seemed to regard me with less distrust, and spoke with more freedom on general subjects. I found him an educated man of tastes too refined, it might be, for his present fortunes, leading one to suppose that they had once been more prosperous. He had held, I learned, a government situation of considerable importance, and had spent, therefore, the best years of his life in Dublin, during which time he had become a husband and a father, but had seen wife and children sink into the grave, victims of consumption, which fatal disease he found when too late had been hereditary in his wife's family. So he had come back, as he sadly observed, broken in health and spirits, to the shelter of the old roof-tree, and the tender care of his sister and niece, his only remaining relatives.

"I have been vegetating here several years," said he, "in this old domicile, dreaming the evening of my life away in the shade of the old ancestral trees which I climbed as a boy in youthful sport, with the cawing of our old rooks forever in my ears like the dirge of departed hopes."

"You have a dull life of it, my dear Maurice," said

his sister sympathizingly. "Indeed, indeed, you have."

"There you are mistaken, Ella!" he replied with an effort at cheerfulness; "since my health failed, I am wholly unfit, you know, for active life, and rest and quiet are all the boons I crave. What should I do were it not that Providence left me you and Margaret to minister now to my many wants? Eh? Ella?"

"Providence is always a rich provider, dear brother; but then you have had many afflictions. Please God, they are all over now, though."

I could see, what Miss Fitzgerald was spared seeing, the change that passed over the old man's face at these words. He winced like one in sudden pain, moved uneasily in his chair, and leaning forward, began to draw together, with the huge iron poker that stood within his reach, the scattered pieces of blazing wood on the hearth.

"Now, Maurice," said his sister in reproachful accents, "I know what you are thinking of, but, after all, neither you nor I need repine, so long as we have a home to shelter us in our latter days."

"Yes, but you must own it is rather hard, Ella, for a man of my years to be a dependent."

"A dependent!—Why, Maurice, you do talk strangely at times!—A dependent on your brother's daughter—on one whose whole life is devoted to your comfort and mine. I am so glad poor Margaret is not here."

They seemed to have forgotten my presence, and I rose up softly and went to the farthest of the three windows I have mentioned ; in the recess of each was a cushioned seat, and taking possession of one, I sat looking out on the drifting clouds,—through which the pale moon was now struggling,—and the dark hills overhanging the house, and the waving trees that moaned in the rising blast. Still the voices of the brother and sister came to my unwilling ear, more faintly, but yet distinctly enough to keep up the thread of their discourse.

"You talk, Ella," said Mr. Fitzgerald bitterly, "as if this house, at least, were likely to remain to us. You know not, sister, how little probability there is that even it will be long left in Margaret's hands."

"Why, surely, brother, matters are not so bad as that. You do not mean what you say?" and I could see the stocking she was knitting fall from the blind lady's hands.

"I tell you they are, Ella, and the sooner we make up our minds for the worst it will be all the better for us. Kilorgan cannot remain much longer as it now is. Every day I dread hearing that it is no longer ours."

This, I thought, may explain his distrust of me. He, probably, took me for a herald of evil tidings.

"But does Margaret know this?" inquired Miss Fitzgerald, evidently more alarmed on her niece's account than her own.

"As well as I do," said the uncle. "Margaret is

able to bear her own burdens, and she always insists on knowing just how matters stand."

"Poor child! poor child!" said gentle Aunt Ella, "how sad a fate is hers!"

"Whose fate are you bemoaning so piteously, aunt?" said another voice, which I knew to be the younger Miss Fitzgerald's.

"Suppose it were yours, my dear?" said her uncle evasively.

"Mine it cannot be, Uncle Maurice!" was the cheerful answer; "so long as I have you and Aunt Ella to love and cherish, I can set fortune at defiance. Then," she added in a sort of half jesting way, "have I not houses and lands, to boot?"

"Speak in the singular number, Margaret!" said her uncle with mournful seriousness.

"Well! house and land be it, but the house is the house of my fathers, my childhood's home, and so long as I have that and a dear good uncle and aunt, I will have no one call me poor. A pretty thing, indeed, to say of an heiress!" and she laughed gaily. "But what has become of our guest?"

"Why, that is true," said Aunt Ella; "where is he? I have not heard him speak for some time, and, indeed, forgot all about him."

"No need to be alarmed," said Uncle Maurice, somewhat drily, "you will find Mr. Howard in that far window. He betook himself there a little while ago, tired, I suppose, of talking with us old people."

I hastened to deny the ungracious accusation, and

again took the seat I had quitted near the fire, remarking, as I did so, that I had been admiring the prospect out of doors.

"Not much of a prospect," said the young lady archly; "the view is rather limited for most people's liking. It is just the place," she added, "to shelter the last descendants of a once noble house, and hide their fallen fortunes."

"They were, indeed, a princely house, the Geraldines," said I, affecting not to notice the purport of her remark. "They played a distinguished part, I believe, in Irish history. I know of no finer poem of its kind in our language than that of your Irish poet Davis on the Geraldines. And I repeated the first stanza:

"'Ye Geraldines! ye Geraldines! 'tis full a thousand years,
Since 'mid the Tuscan vineyards bright flash'd your battle spears;
When Capet seized the crown of France your iron shields were known,
And your sabre-dint struck terror on the banks of the Garonne,
But never then, nor thence till now, has falsehood or disgrace
Been seen to soil Fitzgerald's plume, or mantle on his face.'"

"Yes, that is one proud boast," said Uncle Maurice, "but not our proudest:

"'The English monarchs strove in vain, by law, and force, and bribe
To win from Irish thoughts and ways this more than Irish tribe;'

"And this crowning one of all:

"'True Geraldines, brave Geraldines, as torrents mould the earth,
You channell'd deep old Ireland's heart by constancy and worth.'"

"More even than that," said Aunt Ella, her pale cheek glowing with the warm feeling that filled her heart,

"more even than that, Maurice; it was not alone for valor, or patriotism, or princely hospitality our ancestors were distinguished,—the Geraldines were for ages the great protectors of persecuted Catholics, and if some of them were godless and irreligious——"

"To wit, that Earl of Kildare," said her niece archly, "who, when summoned to answer for burning the cathedral of Cashel, protested he would never have burned the cathedral only he thought the Archbishop was in it."

"Well! well! child," resumed her aunt, "I know there were bad men amongst the Geraldines, and irreligious men, too, but what I say is still true, that the Geraldines, both of Kildare and Desmond, suffered for their religion, and, with few exceptions, defended it so long as they had the power."

"The domestic annals of the house must be extremely interesting," I observed.

"Oh, dear! yes," eagerly put in the younger Miss Fitzgerald; "my uncle and aunt could tell so many stories about the Geraldines, in old times, if you could only get them in the humor."

"It would be too great a favor to expect," I said hesitatingly, "but few things would give me greater pleasure than to hear from the lineal descendants of the Geraldines some of the legends which traditional history has preserved of them."

"Well well! some evening before you go I will try and gratify your wish," said Uncle Maurice. "But remember, Mr. Howard, our annals are not all

coulour de rose, nor were all the Geraldines such as the poet's partial fancy has depicted them. With all that can be said in their favor, you will find them much like other men and women—a compound of good and evil, the former sometimes predominating, sometimes the latter.”

“But you forget, my dear sir,” said I smiling, “that I asked but for one night's lodging.”

“Pooh! pooh! Mr. Howard, that would never do,” said the landless, houseless Irish gentleman; “it is not so often we get hold of such company as you in Kilorgan, and you may be sure we shall not let you away so soon as you think. I know my niece will make you heartily welcome.”

“Your welcome ought to be sufficient, dear uncle,” said the young lady with tears in her eyes; “Mr. Howard, I am often tempted to wish that my father had been the younger brother instead of the elder; it is so provoking to hear my Uncle Maurice talk of this house as mine—his father's house. Well! well! I suppose it must be borne. But I'll tell you what, Uncle Maurice, I'll forgive you all, if you tell Mr. Howard a story of the old Geraldines.”

“What! to-night?”

“Yes, to-night, it is early yet.”

“But you forget that we have the Rosary to say, put in her aunt. “We cannot put it off so long, as Sheelah cannot be kept up so late.”

“I know that, aunt, but I meant to have Sheelah in

now, and say the prayers first, then have the story after."

"Well! well! I suppose you must have your own way," said her uncle, and away she went in search of Sheelah the red. I was both touched and edified to see the earnestness and fervor, the deep recollection wherewith all joined in the simple yet beautiful devotion, the red fire-light falling on the family group, with Sheelah barely visible in the corner to which she retreated, the large and dimly-lighted hall, with its quaint adornments, the fire-light at either end blending with the faint flicker of the two tallow candles near us on the wall, and through the uncurtained windows the solemn hills without and the trees, and the wan moon visible through fleecy clouds. It was a picture that fixed itself forever on my memory.

When the prayers were ended, including a *Pater* and *Ave* for the souls of the faithful departed, especially those of friends and kindred, and "those who died in war or have none in this world to remember or pray for them,"—according to the touching formula of Catholic faith and piety,—Sheelah retired to her own region of the house, and we four drew our chairs around the hearth, on which fresh fuel had been piled.

"What story shall I tell, Margaret?" said Uncle Maurice, as his niece arranged the cushion under his feet.

"Suppose you tell about Gerald Fitz Walter and his Welsh wife, uncle?"

"Well! that is going back very far into our annals, and, moreover, the story is none of the most edifying."

"Oh! never mind about that; what disgrace there is in it did not exactly 'soil Fitzgerald's plume,' though it might have 'mantled on his face.'"

"Well! then, Mr. Howard! I will go back pretty near the root of our family tree, at least in these islands, and tell you the story of

GERALD FITZ WALTER AND THE WELSH PRINCESS.

"I suppose you are aware that the Geraldines claim to be descended from the Gherardini, a noble family of Tuscany, much distinguished in the earlier annals of that country." I replied in the affirmative. "Well! knowing so much, you must also know that some of the family came to England before the time of the Norman conquest. In the reign of Edward the Confessor, the Geraldine Otho was in high favor at the English Court, and although he and his sons fought valiantly for the Saxons against the Norman invaders, still, by a fortunate chance, when William the Conqueror was seated on the throne, and Otho had gone the way of all flesh, his son and successor, Walter Fitz Otho, was recognized as a Norman noble, and left in full possession of the lands wherewith the Saxon princes had liberally rewarded his father's tried fidelity. Walter was appointed Castellan of Wind-

sor and Warden of the Forests of Berkshire. He married Gladys, daughter of the Prince of North Wales, and had by her three sons, with the eldest of whom, Gerald Fitz Walter, we have now to deal.

"It was the reign of Henry I., and by that prince Gerald Fitz Walter was appointed Constable of Pembroke Castle, one of the strongest fortresses in Wales, and subsequently President of the county of Pembroke, both offices of great trust. He was sent in command of the British forces against the Welsh, who were then engaged in their last desperate struggles to throw off the English yoke. Gerald was a dashing cavalier, a true Geraldine in character and in appearance, and knew as well how to win a fair lady's heart as to conquer a rival in the field. His fine appearance and gallant bearing, together with the high renown he had early gained, won the admiration even of his enemies, and he won, almost unsought, the fairest lady in Wales. This was Nesta, the daughter of Rees ap Griffith ap Tudor Mawr, Prince of South Wales. Lovely she was as a poet's dream, with a voice like the soft breathing of an *Æolian* harp, and a smile that was witchery itself, but alas! there was a stain on her fair name that time itself could never efface. She was in the prime of life when Gerald Fitz Walter made her his wife, and had been already married to Stephen, constable of Cardigan, another Norman chief commanding in Wales, and by him had one son, afterwards too well known in Irish history as Robert Fitz Stephen. But, sad to

say, before the valiant Norman noble placed a ring on her finger, the Welsh enchantress had been the unwedded mother of two sons, and their father was Henry Beauchere, king of England. These two sons like their half brother, Fitz Stephen, were men of renown in after times,—one being the famous Robert of Gloucester, and the other the scarcely less celebrated Meyler Fitzhenry, another of the Norman knights who accompanied Henry II. to Ireland. So the still beautiful widow of the constable of Cardigan, the former mistress of Henry I., became the wife of Gerald Fitz Walter.”

“More shame for him,” said Aunt Ella more warmly than she generally spoke. “Say who will to the contrary, I always consider that same Gerald Fitz Walter and this marriage of his as one of the few blots that rest on the fair escutcheon of the Geraldines.”

“I do not deny it, sister, but still his story is somewhat romantic, and so I consented to tell it for the entertainment of our guest. The marriage was for some time as prosperous as heart could wish; three sons and one daughter had the fair Nesta borne Gerald Fitz Walter, and the closest bonds of affection seemed to unite the husband and wife. Nothing but death, it seemed, could divide them. But storms will come when least expected, and when the sun of prosperity shines the brightest, the thundercloud may be nearest at hand. Little dreamed Gerald of the tempest of wrath and ruin

that was gathering even then over the towers of Pembroke Castle.

"It was Christmas in the princely halls of Dyvet, the ancestral fortalice of Cadogan ap Bleddyn, Prince of Cardigan; high wassail reigned amongst the Welsh nobles and chieftains who sat as guests round the prince's table; the bards struck their harps to the songs of praise and of martial story, and the chieftains drained the brimming bowl to the health of their respective lady-loves. Then did one of the company declare that Cambria could boast no dame so fair as Nesta, the wife of the Norman Gerald Fitz Walter, and daughter of Rees ap Griffith. Hearing this, Owen, son of the princely host, conceived a violent desire to see this peerless beauty, who was his own cousin, much doubting if she were indeed so matchless fair as fame bespoke her.

"With as little delay as possible, Owen Cadogan set out, gallantly attended, to pay a friendly visit, as it were, to his cousin the lady of Pembroke Castle. The first sight of Nesta was fatal to his peace; he found her far surpassing all that he had heard, a queen in beauty and in grace, resplendent with light, as the sun at noonday, 'so he hyperbolically expressed it.' He would likely have compared her to Helen of Greece, or Cleopatra of Egypt, had he been aware of the historic fame of those old-world paragons of perfection. But little knew the chieftains of those days, in Wales or elsewhere, of classic lore, and it is morally certain that our Welsh prince was wholly

unconscious that such personages as Mark Antony or Cleopatra had ever lived, or that the faithless wife of Menelaus had ever been carried away by the son of Priam. But although he had probably never heard the name of the Grecian Helen, Owen ap Bleddyn knew well how to play the part of Paris, and he vowed in his inmost heart that the jewel he so coveted should be his before the crescent moon that rested on Snowdon's lofty peak should gain her fullest circumference. No qualms of conscience restrained the ardor of the young man's unholy passion, for religion, indeed, had made little, if any, progress amongst the Welsh mountaineers of those early days.

"Messages he dared not send to Nesta, lest the messenger should fall into the hands of Gerald, whose bold and warlike character he well knew. Attempts which he made to obtain a private interview with Nesta all failed, and the fierce Cambrian returned to his father's castle, there to cherish in secret his unhallowed passion, and devise means to obtain possession of its object.

"Having made up his mind to carry Nesta off by force, the difficulty was how to accomplish his end. Pembroke Castle was of such strength as to defy all the force he could bring against it, even had his father been cognizant of his scheme and willing to sanction it; he, therefore, conceived a fearful project, which he carried out with the fierce energy of his character.

"At the dead hour of night, when the garrison of Pembroke Castle were asleep, and the family of

Gerald Fitz Walter; when the lady moon shone in through the splayed window, or rather loophole, of their turret chamber on the sleeping forms of Lord Gerald and his wife, they were suddenly awoke by the clash of arms on the staircase without. Gerald sprang from his couch, and would have rushed to the door, but Nesta, laying her hand on his arm, besought him not to peril his safety by flying in the face of danger. In vain Gerald strove to persuade her that there could be no danger, that the warders were vigilant and the garrison strong; some strange presentiment was knocking at the heart of the beautiful princess, and, ever as the clamor without increased, she pressed her husband the more urgently to make his escape. Sensible that no time was to be lost, if armed foes were really within the castle, as he could scarcely doubt from the tumultuous sounds so near his chamber door, and that hemmed in, like a lion in a cage, the valor of his single arm could nothing avail against overwhelming odds, Gerald acceded to his wife's request, and, with her assistance, let himself down by a rope from the window. It was hard to convince him that he ought to leave wife and children exposed to unknown danger, but Nesta represented to him that he owed it to them to save his life, for who would protect them if he were then cut off. The argument was all conclusive. Many a whispered word of fond endearment passed between the noble Geraldine and his beautiful wife as he committed his goodly bulk to the rope, one end of which they had fastened se-

curely within the chamber. The last, last words were a whispered promise to meet at a certain place well known to both, in case Nesta succeeded in leaving the castle unobserved. 'In any case,' said Nesta, 'I am yours forever. Should we never meet again, Gerald, remember me as I will remember you.' It is probable that Gerald and Nesta both thought then that death alone could separate them. But it was not so written.

"Nesta's fears had not deceived her; her husband had scarcely reached the ground when the door of her chamber was forced open, and foremost of a band of Welsh soldiers, Owen ap Bleddyn presented himself to her view. Dropping on one knee, he bowed his stately head before her in humblest homage, and in reply to her indignant questioning, boldly averred that he had taken that step to obtain her without whom he could no longer live. 'Owen,' said Nesta with her air of queenly pride, 'knowest thou not that I am the wife of Lord Gerald Fitz Walter and the mother of his children.'—'That know I, fairest Nesta!' the chieftain answered with a bold, confident look, 'but I also know that the wife of Gerald Fitz Walter was the leman of Henry Beauclerc. I offer you now the heart and home of a Welsh prince, one of your own blood, more worthy your love, you cannot but know, than any Norman robber that ever crossed the seas to Britain. Why should such beauty bless the stranger only, when Cambria still has sons with bold hearts and stout

arms to protect her daughters and hearts of fire to love and cherish them? Come, Nesta! daughter of Llewellyn's race, come with me to the wild fastnesses of our native mountains, where no stranger's foot may follow!

"Nesta spurned the insulting proposal as haughtily and as firmly as woman could;—what virtue she might have had, and what affection for her husband, aided and supported by her resentment of the bitter taunt so wantonly flung in her face. But indignation and protestation were alike useless; having set the king's authority at defiance by effecting a forcible entrance into a royal fortress, Owen was determined that the risk he ran should not be for nothing, and when he left Pembroke Castle in flames an hour later, he took with him the wife of Gerald Fitz Walter and his two eldest sons to keep as hostages. The other two children rescued from the flames were left in care of their nurse and their mother's attendants, only one of whom she was permitted to take with her."

Here Uncle Maurice paused, asking me if I were tired listening, for that if so, he could postpone the sequel of his tale till the following evening. I assured him I was so much interested in the story that I should be sorry to have my curiosity on the stretch for another day.

"And I know there is not much more to tell," said the younger Miss Fitzgerald, "so please, Uncle Maurice, go on and finish your story."

"Did Gerald ever recover his wife?" I asked.

"That he did not; you may imagine the rage and astonishment of the chivalrous noble when he learned the forcible abduction of his wife and sons by Owen ap Bleddyn. The worst of it was that he knew not where to go in pursuit, for Cadogan was one of the most powerful princes in Wales, and his territory was so large and contained so many secure hiding-places in the deep recesses of the mountains, that there was little chance of recovering his lost treasures by open force. Owen had, of course, retreated with his prize far beyond the reach of the injured husband, so, for the present, Gerald had but to nurse his wrath, and curse the folly that had made him listen to his wife's advice. Nay, he began even to suspect that she was fully aware of the nature and cause of the attack, and had thus contrived to get him out of the way. In this opinion he was too sadly confirmed, when a few weeks after his two sons were sent to his gates at night, the messenger escaping in the darkness. From the boys he learned that it was at their mother's request they were sent back, and that Owen of Cadogan had fled with her to Ireland, fearing his revenge. Whether Nesta was detained by force, or had become the willing captive of the Welsh chieftain, her bereaved husband had no means of knowing, and from the antecedents of her life, his previous suspicions gathered strength, and whilst vowing to be one day revenged of the ravisher, he endeavored to take

from his heart the fair but faithless Nesta, as he now in bitter sorrow began to consider her.

"Years passed, but brought no comfort to the husband so cruelly bereaved, so foully wronged. Never again did Gerald Fitz Walter behold the mother of his children, and never yet had Owen ap Bleddyn come within reach of his vengeful arm. Eight years had rolled away, when Cadogan, supposing that time had blunted the sting of Gerald's grief and mortification, ventured to return to his native country. Immediately after he received an order from the king to join the royal forces under Robert of Gloucester, Henry's son by the Princess Nesta, who was marching against Rees ap Tudor, his mother's brother.

"Owen ap Bleddyn, marching with his followers through a thick wood, seized some cattle for his men's subsistence, the owners whereof carried their complaint, of all men in the world, to Gerald Fitz Walter, who, as Constable of Pembroke Castle, was also on his way to join the royal army. It were vain to attempt describing the fierce exultation wherewith Gerald heard the news of Cadogan's being at length within his reach, and, burning to avenge his injured honor, he hastened forward, entered the wood with a strong detachment of his men, and marched rapidly in pursuit of Owen. Nor was it long till he came in sight of the Welsh party, and that hour was fatal to Owen."

"What?" I asked in horror, "did your ancestor actually murder his antagonist in cold blood?"

"Oh, no! not quite so bad as that," replied Mr. Fitzgerald, smiling, "a general engagement ensued between the Normans who followed Gerald, and the Welsh adherents of Cadogan; in the *melée* the latter was slain by an arrow, and thus paid with his life the penalty of his crime. So ends the story of Gerald Fitz Walter and the fair Nesta."

I thanked Uncle Maurice for the pleasure his narrative had afforded me, and after chatting awhile longer round the now decaying embers, the old gentleman took a light and conducted me through more than one passage on an upper floor to the room where I was to pass the night. Well pleased with what I had seen since my arrival, I lay long pondering on the strange vicissitudes of human life before sleep came to seal my senses, and even in my dreams the old Geraldines and the little family of their descendants I had just left mingled oddly in my dreams. So passed my first night in Kilorgan House.



CHAPTER III.

WHEN I awoke next day the gray light of morning the late autumnal morning, made all things dimly visible in the room. I lay yet a few moments leisurely surveying the quaint and old-fashioned furniture, which could never have been magnificent, but might, in its day, have had some pretensions to richness. It was, like everthing I saw about the house, somewhat the worse for the wear, bespeaking all too plainly the decayed fortunes of its owners. A few pictures in tarnished gilt frames garnished the walls; they were engravings of religious and devotional subjects, one representing the *stigmata* of St. Francis of Assisium. Over one—a crucifixion—at the head of the bed was the blessed palm which some one had carried home from church on the last Palm Sunday, in pious commemoration of Our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem; everything, in short, reminded me that I was in the home of a Christian family, proud and happy in manifesting their faith.

I made a hasty toilet, and softly descended the dark oaken stairs, fearful of awaking any of the family who might still be lingering in the realm of sweet forgetfulness. Making my way to the hall-door, which I found unlocked, I strolled out to enjoy the

freshness of the morning and the scene of tranquil beauty that lay within the limits of that secluded dell. The house, I saw, was a plain but substantial building of some dark stone, belonging to no particular style of architecture, and having about it nothing remarkable, except it might be the stacks of tall chimneys of the same stone as the walls surmounting its slated roof at either end, their crenellated tops giving a sort of picturesque look to the sedate looking old manor. The steps leading to the broad, low doorway were cracked in many places, and through the interstices the grass grew thick, while the green moss coating the stones here and there gave mournful evidence of solitude and desertion. Over the projecting arch of the door on a small escutcheon were carved some heraldic devices which I was endeavoring to make out, when the loud, clear tones of a female voice singing to the well-known air of "The Girl I left behind me"—

A lady from the Irish shore,
In search of her true lover,
From Dublin town of high renown,
To England she sailed over.

I fear not death or danger,
I'll leave my home and cross the seas,
To seek my Connaught Ranger.

Smiling at the quaint conceit embodied in the ditty, I listened while the not inharmonious strain continued, then turned again to resume my examination of the armorial bearings over the door of the manor

house. Being wholly unskilled in Irish genealogy and heraldry, I could make nothing of it, and was about to give up the hopeless attempt, when some one behind me said : " Good morning, Mr. Howard ! I see you are an early riser ;" and turning I encountered the laughing eyes of the younger Miss Fitzgerald, under the close straw bonnet.

" Not so early as you," I replied, seeing that she had come up the avenue.

" Oh ! we country people are proverbial, you know, for being up with the lark," she replied carelessly ; " have you been listening to Sheelah's song, as a specimen of Irish rural minstrelsy ?"

" Partly that, and partly endeavoring to decipher the armorial ensigns above the door."

" And you could not succeed. Well ! let me assist you : those are the arms of the Fitzgeralds and Plunkets quartered. The house was built by my great-grandfather, Garrett Fitzgerald, whose wife was one of the Dunsany Plunkets. There on the dexter side you see the saltire *gules* and the three chaplets *or* of the Kildare Geraldines ; on the sinister, the castle of the Plunkets ; the double crest, you perceive, is the collared ape of the Geraldines with the horse *passant* of the Plunkets, Lords Dunsany."

" What a lovely spot this is !" I said ; " I have just been thinking what a location it would have been for a monastery. Nothing is wanting to complete the secluded and romantic character of the place, not even the gurgling of the rill," pointing to a limp'd

stream which ran brawling down between two of the hills, winding its way through the vale below, half hidden by the trees that fronted the house. I added, half unconsciously—

“A region of repose it seems,
A place of slumber and of dreams,
Remote among the wooded hills!”

Miss Fitzgerald promptly continued in her laughing way—

“For there no noisy railway speeds,
Its torch-race scattering smoke and gleeds.”

“And our old house, Mr. Howard! is it not

“‘A kind of old Hobgoblin Hall,
Now somewhat fallen to decay,
With weather-stains upon the wall,
And stairways worn, and crazy doors,
And creaking and uneven floors,
And chimneys huge, and tiled, and tall?’”

“Built, too, it would seem,” I answered,

“‘When men lived in a grander way,
With ampler hospitality,’”

looking the surprise I really felt on finding Longfellow's new poem, as it then was, so familiar to the tongue of a young woman in a remote district of Ireland, her condition,—be her lineage what it might,—no better than that of a farmer's daughter in England.

“Speaking of hospitality,” said Miss Fitzgerald, “had you not better come in to breakfast, Mr. Howard? See, I have been out gathering eggs, providing

for the morning meal," and she showed a small basket she had in her hand. "Our hens will stray, do as we may, and 'lay away,' too, as the old song says. But, I declare, there is Sheelah peeping round the corner to see if I am coming. Pray excuse me!" And away she tripped with her basket of eggs, looking, in her short gray cloak and dowdy bonnet, not very unlike the little woman in the nursery tale who "went to the market her eggs for to sell."

"Pity she does not dress with a little more taste," I said to myself, as I watched her till she turned the corner; "she is not so bad looking, after all." In the hall I met Mr. Fitzgerald, who, after the usual salutations, informed me that his sister awaited us at the breakfast-table. The meal was a pleasant one,—not because of the quality of the viands, for they were simple enough, consisting only of tea, wheaten and oaten cakes, fresh butter and the eggs gathered by Margaret Fitzgerald, in the gray morning twilight,—but it was the agreeable and intelligent conversation of the little family, so easy, so natural, yet so refined, that threw a charm over everything, and made the homely table more enjoyable than the most elegant and *récherché déjeuner* of the rich and great.

Breakfast being over, the younger lady told her aunt she was going to the dairy,—“A very small one,” she said to me laughingly, “for we keep but one cow now-a-days. I shall not be long away, Aunt Ella,” she added, turning to her aunt; “but if you

want me, you know where to find me. But first let me take you to the parlor."

Thither we all adjourned, and Uncle Maurice asked me whether I felt disposed for a walk. "It is not far I can walk," said he, with a melancholy smile, "but I can show you where to go to find rare mountain scenery. I see you hesitate : you surely do not think of leaving us so soon?"

"I hope not," said Aunt Ella kindly.

"Why, of course not," said her niece in her usual tone of decision ; "it would look as though you fared too hard here, Mr. Howard, to make any stay, and so, for the credit of our house, we cannot let you go for this day, at least."

I shook my head, not knowing well what I ought to say, and that for reasons very different from what they supposed.

"Come," said the young lady of the manor, "stay over to-night, and Uncle Maurice shall tell you another story of the Geraldines. Will that do?"

"Less than that would do," I replied, smiling at my own thought.

"Very well! that is all arranged. I do not ask Uncle Maurice if he will consent,—I know he can never refuse me anything, so the story to-night, and for to-morrow—*nous verrons!* Now for Sheelah and the dairy, Aunt Ella!" And away she went humming a lively air.

"Strange," I thought, "how contented she is in her humble state. Is it religion, or what, that makes

ner so happy amid all her poverty?" As I could not answer the question satisfactorily, I was fain to leave it for further observation to decide.

The day, a bright, sunny autumn day, such as one rarely sees in Ireland at that season, was spent very agreeably in one or two short walks with Mr. Fitzgerald, the early dinner of the family, and a stroll by myself in the afternoon along a path pointed out by Uncle Maurice, winding away amongst the hills and rocky heights where the lichens grew, and the tall ferns nodded to the breeze.

When evening came again, and tea was over, and the wood fire burned brightly in the spacious parlor, we again drew our chairs round the cheerful hearth, and Uncle Maurice began his story as follows :

"The founder of the Irish Geraldines was Maurice Fitzgerald, the son of Gerald Fitz Walter by the Princess Nesta. I am going to tell you how he came to Ireland, and what befell him there. You are probably aware how it happened that the English first invaded Ireland?" I nodded assent. "You know, then, how the King of Leinster, Dermot McMurrough, being dethroned by King Roderick O'Connor for having carried off the wife of O'Rourke, Prince of Breffny, went over to England to solicit aid from Henry the Second. Henry, unable to assist him at that time, but still anxious to avail himself of such an opportunity of obtaining some territory in Ireland, promised to send over a large fleet with strong reinforcements for him as soon as he could spare such a

force as he deemed needful. The English monarch gave him, at the same time, a written document authorizing any of his warlike subjects who might choose to do so, to go over at once to Ireland with the King of Leinster. Dermot also obtained a promise of aid from the valiant Richard de Clare, Earl of Pembroke, commonly called Strongbow, on account of his great prowess. But Strongbow, any more than Henry, could not bring the promised forces to Ireland for several months, and McMurrough's proud vindictive heart swelled with impotent rage at the thought of returning to Ireland without any means of avenging what he considered his wrongs. It was a bitter disappointment to him to have his vengeance so long deferred, and he was wending his way homeward in a most disconsolate mood, when on reaching St. David's in Wales, he asked and finally obtained hospitality from the Bishop of that place, who was no other than David Fitzgerald, the youngest son of Gerald Fitz Walter.

"Seeing the Irish Prince so dejected, the Bishop asked him the reason, whereupon Dermot told him his story in a way, you may be sure, that exculpated himself and blackened his enemies, making himself out the victim of a wicked conspiracy. He wound up by saying that, although King Henry and the Earl of Pembroke had promised to aid him with sea and land forces, neither could do anything for him for several months, a long time, he pathetically said, to a monarch deprived of his throne by the foulest injustice.

“‘Oh! an’ that be all,’ said the sympathizing prelate, ‘we may be able to assist you somewhat. I have two brothers, valiant knights as any in Britain, and I know they will desire no better than to lead their followers into Ireland to aid you in recovering your territory.’

“This was good news for Dermot, who eagerly accepted the offer, and the Bishop sent immediately to his brother, Maurice Fitz Gerald, and his half-brother, Robert Fitz Stephen, promising them, in Dermot’s name, the town of Wexford, and two baronies in its vicinity, if he succeeded in recovering his kingdom.

“Fitz Stephen accompanied Dermot on his return, Fitz Gerald remaining in England to complete their preparations and bring over what force he could muster in the Spring. Dermot succeeded in bringing four hundred men together, and with this force, organized by Fitz Stephen, assaulted and took Wexford, thus securing a foothold for himself and his English allies. A few weeks after sailed Maurice Fitz Gerald up the Slaney with two good ships, having on board ten knights, thirty men-at-arms, and a hundred archers. This force, however small it may appear, was a strong reinforcement for Dermot, considering the valor of the knights of those days, with the well-tried courage and skill of their followers. They were men of might, those stalwart Norman knights, and brought with them to Ireland arts of warfare hitherto unknown to the natives, who fought them, therefore at a great disadvantage. An evil day it was full sure

for Ireland when the proud pennons of Fitz Stephen and Fitz Gerald, with the royal flag of England, floated over Wexford town, the first Norman banners unfurled on Irish soil.

"Emboldened by his success in Wexford, and feeling the immense advantage he had gained in these valiant Welsh knights, Dermot proposed to his new allies to march with him against the Danes of Dublin, whom, as yet, he had never been able to subdue. Nothing could be more acceptable to the daring adventurers than this new proposition; the more danger the more honor, they thought, and if, perchance, they could succeed in taking Dublin for McMurrough, it would much improve their own fortunes, low enough at the time of their landing in Ireland. Only one of the brothers, however, accompanied Dermot on this expedition, and that one was Maurice Fitz Gerald. Fitz Stephen, mindful of the great law of self-preservation, chose to remain behind to build a castle at Carrig on the lands given him by McMurrough.

"The attack on Dublin was successful; Dermot McMurrough entered the city as a conqueror, with Fitz Gerald by his side in glittering armor, and the royal banner of Leinster soon waved over tower and bastion. The gratitude of the monarch to his brave ally knew no bounds, and in order to reward his services, and at the same time bind him to his interest, he devised a plan which he lost no time in carrying out.

"The flush of conquest was on Fitz Gerald's brow,

when suddenly appeared in Dublin, summoned thither with her attendants by her father, the Princess Eva, daughter and sole heiress of Dermot McMurogh. A vision of beauty she was, esteemed at the time the fairest lady within the Irish seas, and in that chivalrous age you may easily imagine what a charm her presence gave to the monarch's improvised court in Dublin. Dazzled by the grace and beauty of the Irish princess, Fitz Gerald bowed before her in admiration. Her father, well pleased to see the impression she had made, smiled in his own sardonic way when the knight said as he turned away, alluding to the promise of his daughter's hand held out by Dermot to Strongbow as an inducement:

"'God's mercy, but it is a pity to wed so fair a maiden to such a graceless spendthrift as Richard de Clare. I would some other might have so beauteous a prize.'

"'What sayest thou to having her thyself, Maurice?' said the wily McMurogh. 'Strongbow may not come, thou knowest, until we have done his work and ours; I have bethought me, therefore, that thou, my trusty friend, and not Strongbow, art best entitled to Eva's hand.'

"The knight started. 'But thy promise, King Dermot, thy promise?'

"'Oh! the promise holds no longer than my convenience,' said Dermot with a hoarse laugh; 'I who made can surely break it.'

"A deeper glow suffused the sun-browned cheek

of the Norman knight; it was the glow of honest indignation. 'Now, by my faith, King Dermot,' said he, 'I hold not promises so lightly. Were thy daughter ten times as fair,—which mortal woman might not be,—wife of mine should she never be to the detriment of another. But I would have you to know, Sir King, that I left a wedded wife in Wales, the mother of my sons who are here with me, and others who are yet too young for the battle's strife. Thus I could not, if I would, accept the hand of the fair and royal lady, your daughter.'

"'You refuse, then?' said Dermot, chafing with anger.

"'How could I but refuse, seeing that I have a wife e'en now?'

"'That is a child's answer, not a mailed knight's,' rejoined the unprincipled monarch; 'as you say your wife is in Wales, and there is little likelihood of your returning thither, why there let her remain. The hand of a princess, and of one whom any king might be proud to wed, is, methinks, well worth the having, for a knight whose fortune is his sword.'

"'True,' said Maurice, the hot blood of the Geraldines flushing cheek and brow, and the proud spirit of the Norman knight flashing from his eyes; 'true I had, as you say, in coming hither no other fortune but my sword, but with that sword I can win my way to a right noble inheritance, and being a Christian man I will have but one wife, as God and Holy Church decree.

An' there be men,' he added significantly, 'who hold the marriage vow of such slight account, Maurice Fitz Gerald is none of them.'

"Fitz Gerald strode away, leaving Dermot McMurrough chafing like a caged lion at thought of the double insult offered him, as he considered, by the refusal of his daughter and the bitter taunt conveyed in the knight's parting words. His anger was all the fiercer because he dared not give way to it; to make an enemy of the bold Norman was what he could ill afford to do."

"What a king Leinster had in McMurrough!" I exclaimed involuntarily.

"He was, indeed, a bold, bad man," said Mr. Fitzgerald; "his name has ever been held in detestation by the Irish people." But to resume my story: "Dermot's conversation with Maurice had been overheard by the Princess Eva, who watched her opportunity to see and thank the Norman knight for the honorable and most worthy part he had played. Confused and embarrassed, the knight began to stammer out an apology, alleging that only his bounden duty could have induced him to reject so high an honor and so fair a prize. But the beautiful Eva assured him with the sweetest of smiles that he might make his mind easy on that head, as it was the greatest favor he could have done her. He looked at her in surprise, whereupon she said, lowering her voice almost to a whisper:

"I see you are honorable enough, Sir Norman, to

be trusted with my secret. Know, then, that my affections have long been given, and my faith plighted, to a young chieftain of our own race, who was brought up at my father's court ; his name you will pardon me for keeping to myself'—'Then you will not marry the Earl of Pembroke?'—'Nor Henry Plantagenet, your English king, would I marry, and break my troth to my well-beloved. But for you, Sir Knight, and you value Eva's friendship, it is yours while her life lasts.' So saying, the princess retired, leaving Fitz Gerald at a loss to know whether Eva's visit and her revelations were a dream or a reality."

"Poor Eva!" sighed Margaret Fitzgerald, "sad, indeed, was her fate in having such a man for her father!"

"True, Margaret," observed her aunt, "it was, indeed, a hard lot to be thus offered for sale to one stranger after another. Well had it been for her were she born in a hovel instead of a palace. But pray go on, Maurice, we interrupt you."

"Eva's constancy to her Irish lover must have been overcome," I said, "since history tells us that she eventually became the wife of Strongbow."

"Alas, yes!" said Mr. Fitzgerald, "much sooner than was expected. Strongbow arrived at Waterford with a strong force, hearing of which Dermot set out to receive him, accompanied by his daughter, Fitz Gerald and Fitz Stephen, the latter having joined his half-brother in Dublin shortly before. It was a goodly sight to see this gallant company riding out through

the southern gate of the even then ancient Danish city. the gorgeous, many-colored garments of the King of Leinster, his royal mantle of scarlet fringed with gold; the rich attire of the princess and her attendants; the picturesque costume of the chiefs who accompanied the king, contrasting finely with the glittering armor of the Norman knights; their waving plumes and floating pennons, with the royal banner of Leinster over all. Many a fair-haired Danish youth sighed that day in Dublin town, as the pale, beautiful face and gentle form of the Lady Eva passed him by in the glittering show; and sigh they might to think that like some bright particular star she was so above them.

"Alas! they who gazed upon her lovely face little knew the joyless heart that beat beneath her costly garments. She felt she was going to her doom, for her stern and cruel father had silenced all her remonstrances and supplications by the terrible announcement that he would kill her, with his own hand, were she an hundred times his daughter, unless she married Strongbow. Eva's was a gentle, timid nature, and she had not courage to tell her father that her affections were already engaged, and to one of his own followers. Sometimes she thought of throwing herself on Strongbow's mercy, but her first introduction to that proud earl convinced her of the folly of such a step. He was evidently captivated by her beauty, and, to her father's great delight, and her own inexpressible sorrow, pressed for the speedy fulfilment of

the king's promise, and the speedy celebration of the nuptials. Dermot was only too glad to accede to the wishes of his powerful ally.

"So the beautiful daughter of McMurrough was led an unwilling victim to the altar, and the sacrifice was consummated. Little did Richard de Clare know that the fair creature he so longed to call his own had no heart to give him in exchange for his. Still they lived together for many years 'till death did them part.' But one child of this marriage survived, a daughter, named Isabel, whose blood still flows in some of the noblest families of Ireland. According to the legendary history of those times the object of Eva's secret affection was the young O'Regan, her father's secretary, a scion of a noble Irish house, but poor in this world's goods."

There was a dead silence for some time after Mr. Fitzgerald had ceased to speak, each one buried in their own reflections on the brief but stirring narrative just ended. At last I broke the silence by asking:

"And this brave and high-souled Maurice Fitzgerald was the founder of the Irish Geraldines?"

"He was; the grant of land first bestowed upon him by Dermot was soon followed by others, and Maurice, like all the other Norman invaders of Ireland, soon acquired, by conquest, from the native chieftains, some of the richest and fairest tracts in Ireland."

"It was hard," I said, "for the Irish chieftains to be thus despoiled of their rightful possessions."

"True it was so," Uncle Maurice replied, "but in judging of these things we must remember, Mr. Howard, that the age was at best semi-barbarous; that men were in a wild, unsettled state, and that the law of might was universally recognized as superior to that of right. We cannot judge the men of that day by the same rule that we would our own contemporaries. But I see Ellice is nodding in her chair and even my bonny brown girl here,"—this was a pet name he often gave his niece,—“looks as though she were half asleep."

"There is no denying it, Uncle Maurice," said Margaret, "I can hardly keep my eyes open; you and Mr. Howard must excuse me if I say good night. Come, Aunt Ella, let us to the land of Nod." So saying she took her aunt's arm, and the two ladies withdrew, an example which Mr. Fitzgerald and myself soon followed.



CHAPTER IV.

I WAS early abroad on the following morning, and had made quite a long ramble amongst the hills before the usual breakfast hour of the family. I had seen the sun raise his broad disc from behind the broken line of the eastern horizon, scattering the thick autumnal mists that had draped the mountain sides, and had seen his first golden beams reflected on the silvery surface of the Maigne. I came back deeply impressed with the beauty of the country, and, on entering the breakfast-room, was about to express my admiration of what I had seen, when a glance at the faces of Mr. Fitzgerald and the ladies checked the words on my lips; I felt that something had happened to disturb their tranquillity. They were waiting for me, and I hastened to apologize for my want of punctuality.

During breakfast I noticed that Mr. Fitzgerald was more silent than usual, and his sister still more pensive and dejected; even the buoyant spirits of the younger lady seemed to have deserted her. At last I ventured to ask Miss Fitzgerald whether she felt as well as usual. Quite as well, she assured me.

"That is to say," said her niece, regarding her with a mournful smile, "that you feel as well as it is possible for one to feel who is about to be turned out of

house and home—the home, too, of generations of their family.”

“I trust that is not your aunt’s case, Miss Fitzgerald?” I said in a voice which I vainly strove to render steady.

“Why should we conceal it?” she answered abruptly, and with some degree of sternness; “it is my aunt’s case, and Uncle Maurice’s case, and mine, too, heiress as they call me.”

“You have heard some bad news, I fear? Excuse me for asking.”

“Why, yes, I suppose we may call it bad news,” she replied in the same tone as before. “Uncle Maurice has just got his weekly paper from Dublin, and, amongst other items of news, finds there the very agreeable announcement that the lands of Kilorgan, with the ancient manor-house appertaining thereto, were sold in the Landed Estates Court in Dublin some ten days since.”

“Sold! and by whom?” I asked, turning to Mr. Fitzgerald.

“By the creditors, of course,—we were notified some weeks since that this, the last remnant of our family property, would shortly be brought to the hammer. It was heavily incumbered even when my brother came into possession of it some twenty years ago, and God alone knows, for I do not, how poor Gerald managed to keep it. Since his death, three or four years ago, we have been constantly expecting to hear of the place being sold. Still,” he added,

with a heavy sigh, "long as we have been looking for it, the news takes us by surprise at last."

"Is it stated who is the purchaser?" I asked after a pause.

"Yes,—and, by-the-bye, he is a namesake of yours, possibly a relation;" taking the paper from his pocket, and putting on his glasses, he read,—'*Lands of Kilorgan, sold to Edmund E. Howard, Esq., of Herefordshire, England.*'"

"Edmund E. Howard, of Herefordshire," I repeated; "of course he is my relation, and friend to boot. I am glad it was he that bought Kilorgan, since bought it has been."

"It matters little to us who has bought Kilorgan," said Margaret Fitzgerald proudly; "*we* expect nothing, as we would accept nothing, from any purchaser."

"But I know," said I, "it will be easy to make some arrangement with my cousin, so that you can remain here as before."

"No, Mr. Howard," said the young lady again with a spirit that well became her, "when once Kilorgan has passed into stranger hands, we have no desire to remain in it. We have long known that our tenure of it was very uncertain, being entirely optional with the creditors;—we are not taken by surprise, I assure you. Uncle Maurice," turning to him, "do you think you can walk as far as Farrell O'Driscoll's, to see if he can bring some men to-morrow to finish the digging of our potatoes?"

"Certainly, my dear, certainly; I feel quite strong to-day. Mr. Howard, perhaps you would like to accompany me, that is, if you are not tired after your long walk this morning."

I willingly accepted the invitation, and we set out immediately, accompanied by Bran, who began to tolerate my presence in the house, and even allowed me to caress him, though still in a half surly way, as though he were not quite certain whether he ought to allow such a liberty. However, he accompanied us that morning, walking beside Mr. Fitzgerald with the gravity and dignity that became a dog of good family, as Uncle Maurice declared him to be. A walk of fifteen or twenty minutes brought us to Farrell O'Driscoll's cottage, a comfortable-looking abode it was, too,

"'Tho' its walls were of mud,
And its roof was but thatch."

A whole troop, it appeared to me, of young children, scantily clothed, yet looking the picture of health and happiness, gambolled about the door; Farrell himself, who was at work in a potato garden behind the house, quickly made his appearance, taking off his apology for a hat with native politeness; and a fine athletic young fellow he was, with a face brighter and more free from the wrinkles of care than if he were the lord of broad lands.

"O'Driscoll," said my companion, after a kind inquiry for his wife and children, "O'Driscoll, can you manage to bring us some men to-morrow? The frost

is coming, and we want to get in the last of the potatoes. Besides the old place is sold at last, and we don't know when we may have to leave it."

"The ould place!" cried O'Driscoll, all the brightness vanishing from his honest face; "ah! sure your honor isn't in earnest?"

"Indeed I am, O'Driscoll, it is gone at last."

"Ah, then, it's heart sorry I am to hear it, an' it's the black sorrow it'll be to the whole country side to hear the news. Sure aren't the Fitzgeralds in it ever since the wars of Ireland, an' it's a burnin' shame for any one to take it over their heads!"

"Well, never mind that, Farrell—but about the men—the young mistress wants to know if you will try and bring some to-morrow."

"An' to be sure I'll bring as many as ye want, your honor!—it's proud they'll all be to help in with the potatoes up at the big house. How many will I bring, your honor?"

"Oh! as many as you can," said Uncle Maurice smiling.

"Why, then, if I did, your honor, I'd bring the whole country, that's more than we want now-a-days at Kilorgan. Well, well, it's a folly to talk!—but it's the quare world it is, anyhow!"

"So, I may tell Miss Margaret that you'll come, O'Driscoll?" said Mr. Fitzgerald.

"Why, then, to be sure I'll come, your honor, if I was to go through fire and water. An' I'll bring as many wid me as I think 'll be able to get all the

praties in. An' listen hither, your honor!" he beckoned Mr. Fitzgerald to one side, and said something to him in a whisper, at which the old gentleman smiled and nodded. We then retraced our homeward way.

"May I ask," said I, "Mr. Fitzgerald, how much you pay these men per day?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing!" I repeated, in surprise; "do you really mean to say you get men here to work for nothing?"

"We do, Mr. Howard! at least of late years, that is to say ever since my niece came into the property. The poor fellows have an idea that she is not very well able to pay them for their labor, and so they will not hear of being paid when they work for us. They generally come in such numbers as to finish the work in one day; I have even known them, when they knew our corn or wheat was ripe, to come of their own accord and cut it down by night."

"Very strange, indeed," I said, little accustomed to hear of such doings in my own country. "The Irish are, truly, a singular people."

"Oh! you have seen little of their singularity as yet. What do you think O'Driscoll said to me that time when he took me aside?"

Of course I could not tell. "Well he told me," said Uncle Maurice, with his calm smile, "that there was no need of the young mistress goin' to any bounds—meaning taking any trouble to have meals 'or the men, for that they all knew she couldn't afford

to have things now as they used to be in the old times, an' they'd rayther she wouldn't do it, for that they'll each bring something from home with them. What do you think of that, Mr. Howard?"

"I am truly astonished. Yet these are the people who are commonly spoken of in England as lawless, and turbulent?"

"Why, yes," said Mr. Fitzgerald smiling, "their character is none of the best on your side the water. However, that does not trouble them much. They are so accustomed to hard words spoken of and to them that they seem to take them as a matter of course. Ah! there's Margaret, bustling about as usual. It does astonish me, Mr. Howard, how that girl can devote herself to business as she does. The farm, the dairy, the house,—there is nothing she does not attend to."

"It is very fortunate for your niece that she can apply herself to such pursuits. Few young ladies of her age could or would. Our accomplished young ladies, as they are called, would shrink with horror from doing what she does every day, and every hour. These modern accomplishments are often more hurtful than beneficial to their possessor."

"Very true," said Mr. Fitzgerald, and he smiled in a way which I could not understand. We were just ascending the steps, and in the hall met the two ladies, equipped for walking, the younger wrapped in the same woollen shawl,—a bright Scotch tartan, in which I had first seen her.

“Why, Margaret,” said her uncle, “it is but a moment since we saw you with Sheelah in the garden. How did you dress so soon?”

“Oh! you know the old proverb, uncle, *a bonnie bride is easy drest*. The weather is so fine that I thought it a pity for Aunt Ella to remain in-doors all day long. So I am taking her out for a walk. But did you go to O’Driscoll’s?”

“Yes; all that is arranged, I will tell you all about it when you return. You had better hurry off now, while the sun is at the highest.”

“*Au revoir*, then!” And nodding and smiling to each of us she took her aunt’s arm and they were soon lost to sight in the windings of the avenue.

I then announced to Mr. Fitzgerald my intention of leaving Kilorgan that day, as I had business of importance to transact in Dublin.

“But will not your business wait a few days longer?” he asked; “you know, old men love to talk, and I am loath to lose so good a listener.”

“But, really, Mr. Fitzgerald, I feel as though I were trespassing on your kind hospitality.”

“And you feel so,” he said in a tone of pique, “because we are poor; I confess we have not the means to entertain guests precisely as we would wish, but we have still wherewith to supply our wants, and a little to spare for ‘the stranger within our gates.’ If our fare were better, we should be better pleased for your sake; for ourselves we desire no better.”

I hastened to assure the high-spirited old gentleman

that I had never spent three happier days than those I had passed under his hospitable roof, and that I questioned whether I would have enjoyed my visit so much had their hospitality been exercised on a grander scale.

Mr. Fitzgerald's brow resumed its wonted serenity. "I appreciate your politeness, Mr. Howard," said he, "but I will put your sincerity to the test by asking you to stay a day or two longer,—that is, if your affairs will permit your doing so."

There was no refusing such an invitation as this, so I agreed to stay two days longer, on condition that Uncle Maurice would tell me some more about the Geraldines.

"Of course I will," said he; "that is just what I want to do, and I am sure my sister will also ransack her memory for some of the old time stories of our race."

The remainder of the day was passed as usual, and when evening came at last, and the night prayers being said Sheelah put fresh wood on the fire and withdrew, Uncle Maurice commenced his recital:

"When Henry the Second found that the Norman adventurers had already acquired such extensive possessions in Ireland, he made what haste he could to bring over such a force as would enable him to conquer the whole island, for such was his ambitious project. Having landed at Waterford, which was already in the hands of the English, he marched through the heart of Munster to Cashel, receiving on his way the

homage of several Irish princes, chief amongst whom was Donald O'Brien, king of Thomond, who surrendered to him his city of Limerick. It was on the banks of the historic Suir, in sight of the ruined palaces and shrines of Cashel of the Kings, that this humiliating scene took place, in presence of Norman knights, and Irish princes and chiefs. Following the example of Donald, nearly all the minor princes and toparchs of the south tendered their submission and swore fealty to the English king. Elated by success, Henry returned to Waterford, and thence proceeded to Dublin, anxious to take possession of the capital of what he considered his new kingdom.

"It was towards the middle of November that Henry arrived in Dublin, and the winter soon after setting in with unusual severity, he determined to spend his Christmas on the banks of the Liffey, and to make the festive season an occasion of bringing together his new subjects and his English knights and nobles. There was one difficulty in the way, however, which the king had not foreseen. It was found that the Irish capital, although its commerce was then equal to that of London, did not contain a building large enough for the projected entertainment. But Henry Plantagenet was not the man to give up a cherished plan for the sake of any difficulty its execution might offer, so he ordered a temporary building to be erected, and you will doubtless smile on hearing what manner of edifice it was."

"And what was it, Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"Well! it was a vast framework composed of what we Irish call 'wattles,' but what you English would call smooth osier twigs, closely interlaced.

"What a banquetting hall," said Margaret Fitzgerald, "for a prince who, with all his faults, may well be called the noblest of the Plantagenets!"

"It is true the structure was not very imposing, Margaret," said the uncle, "but when hung around on the inside with costly tapestry, and decorated with the Christmas evergreens, and the richly emblazoned banners of the Norman chivalry of England, the hall did not look unworthy of the occasion. Behind the king was displayed the royal banner of England, then new and strange to the Irish, since, alas! but too familiar to their eyes—and supporting it on either side were the banners of Fitzgerald and De Burgo, the former with its saltire gules and its three golden chaplets, the latter with its ruby cross—too red and bright for the cold and politic men who bore it. Of all the Norman invaders of Ireland the Fitzgeralds alone merited the high distinction of bearing the cross on their banners, but the heralds of earlier times had given it to the De Burgos, and it was not till ages after that the Geraldines became so closely and irrevocably identified with the religion of the cross; that is to say, when the great spiritual rebellion of the sixteenth century divided Christendom into two great armies, and ranged the faithful under the sacred standard of the Crucified.

"At this Christmas feast were introduced for the first time in Ireland (as old chronicles tell) many of the luxuries and exquisite delicacies for which the Norman conquerors of France and England were then famous, and around the sumptuously-laden board sat the proud and valorous Norman nobles whose invincible prowess—robbers as they were—nor man nor woman may deny. Names which have since become historic as the founders of almost princely houses, were there bandied about from mouth to mouth in the easy familiarity of social enjoyment, and knights whose broadswords and battle-axes had flashed death and destruction on many a battle-field of Europe, were there assembled at King Henry's board beneath the Christmas holly and misletoe, whiling away the hours in playful dalliance with the fair and stately dames whose colors they proudly bore on the red field of danger.

"Foremost amongst King Henry's knights, and near his royal person, sat Maurice Fitz Gerald, his two sons, his nephew, Raymond Le Gros, and his half-brothers, Robert Fitz Stephen and Meyler Fitz Henry, the heroes of the Norman invasion; and William Fitz Adelm de Burgo, and Hugo de Lacy, the first and second Viceroys of Ireland; Milo de Cogan, the first English Governor of Dublin; there, too, were Roger de la Poër, and Maurice Prendergast; and John de Courcy, the stalwart and gigantic; and there too, was Richard de Clare, the far-famed Strongbow, whom, since the days of William the Conqueror, no

man had equalled in feats of archery; but it was remarked that Strongbow's place was not so near the king as that of Fitz Gerald or De Burgo, for even then Henry Plantagenet had begun to manifest his jealousy of Pembroke's fame and his distrust of the power he had gained.

"And amongst these warrior knights and nobles were seen full many a fair and noble dame whose presence gave grace and softness to the picture. First and fairest of these was Eva, Countess of Pembroke, wife of Strongbow, and daughter of Dermot, the false king of Leinster; near her sat the Lady Basilia, sister of Strongbow, then wife of his standard-bearer, De Quenci, after whose death on the field of battle she became the well-beloved wife of Raymond Le Gros; there, in her matronly grace and beauty, sat Alice de Montgomery (the near kinswoman of William the Conqueror), wife of Maurice Fitz Gerald, and the mother of his five gallant sons; and near her, in the freshness and sweetness of early womanhood, was seen her daughter Nesta, who afterwards became the wife of Hervey de Montmaresco, who, though many years her senior, won her heart and hand by his knightly bearing and right loyal devotion.

"And presiding over all, with that kingly mien which distinguished him in hall or bower, sat, on a dais surmounted by a silken canopy at the upper end of the hall, the mirror of chivalry, the royal lover of the hapless Rosamond Clifford, the husband of Eleanor fair and false, Henry Plantagenet, the second of the

name who reigned in Britain. You remember what Mrs. Hemans makes his 'late repentant' son, Richard, say of this unprincipled, but accomplished prince—

“ ‘Thou wert the noblest king on the royal throne e'er seen,
And thou didst wear in knightly ring, of all the stateliest mien,
And thou didst prove, where spears are proved, in war the noblest
heart.

With royal grace and courtesy he entertained his guests that merry Christmas day, directing the larger share of his attention to the few Irish princes who had accepted his invitation, and who occupied seats on the dais beside him in the royal robes of their own nation. Amongst these were, we may well believe, the traitor Dermot McMurrough, king of Leinster, and Donald O'Brien, king of Thomond, or North Munster, who had, as I have already told you, recently submitted to Henry, also his son, Donald, surnamed the Handsome. It must have been a sad humiliation for these descendants of an hundred kings to sit there, in the capital of their own country, as the guests of a foreign prince, the banner of England waving above their heads, and around them the mail-clad knights who had already wrested from those of their nation, if not from themselves, some of the fairest and richest lands in Ireland. But Henry had a way of winning those whose favor he sought to gain, and it is certain that he who in pride and passion caused the murder of St. Thomas à Becket was gentle and courteous to some; it is equally certain that he contrived to keep on good terms while

in Ireland with many of those kings and princes whose possessions he and his were coolly appropriating to themselves."

"I should like to have seen that Christmas feast," said Margaret Fitzgerald; "would not you, Aunt Ella?"

The blind lady smiled, and said :

"Suppose I were there, Margaret! what then? All the fine sight your uncle has been describing would have been lost on me. Not even King Henry's short mantle* could I have seen."

"And it is not that or the king either that I should like to have seen, aunt, but the first Irish Geraldines there brought together in all their glory. I can imagine Maurice Fitz Gerald, 'an honorable and modest man,' as the chronicles describe him: 'with a face sunburnt and well-looking, of middle height; a man well modelled in mind and body. . . . A man of few words, but full of weight, having more of the heart than of the mouth, more of reason than of volubility, more wisdom than eloquence; . . . a sober, modest, and chaste man, constant, trusty, and faithful; a man not altogether without fault, yet not spotted with any notorious or great crime.' Even the royal Henry might have envied the Welsh knight with his fair name and his goodly band of stalwart kinsmen. Well! it is something to have such a man for one's

* In ancient chronicles Henry the Second is often styled Henry Curt-Mantel, because of the short cloak, or cape, he was fond of wearing, after the fashion of Anjou.

ancestor, no matter how remote." And the young lady's cheek glowed and her brown eyes lit up with a sudden flash; her uncle looked at her and sighed; he was about to speak, but Margaret anticipated him, saying with a nervous, sudden change of manner, while the glow faded from her cheek and the light from her eye:

"But where is the use in looking back? Not a trace of the olden glory remains with us now, and, were it not for the high esteem in which Maurice Fitz Gerald was held by his companions in arms, one might as well, and, perhaps, better, have had a ploughman for their ancestor, like the Hays of Scotland. But, Uncle Maurice, as I suppose you have nothing more to tell about King Henry's Christmas feast in Dublin, suppose you tell Mr. Howard in what proud and bold array the Geraldines went to meet King Henry's first viceroy."

"I will, child, but, as it is only short, I will ask you to sing a song for us after. It is some time now since I heard you sing."

Margaret laughingly promised, and her uncle resumed as follows:

"What I am about to tell you, Mr. Howard, is merely an incident of the earlier sway of the Geraldines in Ireland, going to prove, however, that from the first days of the English invasion the family occupied a prominent place amongst their Norman compeers. When Henry sent over William Fitz Adelm de Burgo, as his first justiciary or viceroy in

Ireland, he was met, on the confines of Wexford, by Raymond le Gros, accompanied by thirty knights, mounted on fine steeds richly caparisoned, the knights clothed in shining armor, and all bearing on their pennons the well-known cognizance of the Fitzgeralds. The new viceroy was taken by surprise; he was not prepared to find the Geraldines already so strong, and, knowing their daring and ambitious spirit, he was not well pleased to see the warlike Le Gros and his kinsmen in possession of such power. From that hour might be traced the jealous rivalry that existed ever after between the Geraldines and the De Burgos, a rivalry which for many generations convulsed the South and West, and dyed many a battle-field with the best Norman blood of Ireland.

“But little cared the bold Geraldines what De Burgo thought of them; as yet they owed him or his no ill-will, and it was without one feeling of dissatisfaction that Raymond and his friends conducted De Burgo through the county of Wexford, surrendering to him, as Henry’s lieutenant, the keys of all the castles and keeps they held for the king. That day is one on which the race of Fitzgerald are wont to look back with pride, being, as it were, at the very beginning of their career in Ireland. A score of years or so after that, and Gerald, the eldest son of Maurice Fitz Gerald, was ennobled by the title of Baron of Offaly, and was also for a short time Lord Justice of Ireland. By that time the possessions of the family were, by royal grants and still more by conquest,

increased to such an extent, that their banner waved over castles and towns in four counties of Ireland."

There was a short silence after Uncle Maurice had ceased speaking; there was much in the narrative to give rise to serious thought, and, lost in my own melancholy fancies, I had forgotten all about the song, till I was reminded of it by Miss Fitzgerald's voice asking her niece what she was going to sing. To say the truth I did not expect much in the way of vocal entertainment from the heiress of Kilorgan, so I took but little interest in the matter, and it was really a stretch of politeness on my part to ask if the young lady would not favor us with a song. She smiled, I thought a little maliciously, as she rose from her seat, and going to a distant corner of the spacious apartment returned with a guitar which she began to tune with the air of one who was perfect mistress of her art. I could scarce conceal my surprise, for having seen no musical instrument about the house, I had had no idea that the art was cultivated within the walls of Kilorgan.

"As we have been talking of the Geraldines," said Margaret, "I will sing you 'Desmond's song,' one of the saddest and sweetest of Moore's Melodies."

After running her fingers over the strings in a wild and brilliant prelude, her face assuming the while a sort of melancholy expression, the young lady commenced in a voice of touching sweetness, well suited to the mournful and impassioned lay:

" By the Feal's wave benighted,
No star in the skies,
To thy door by love lighted,
I first saw those eyes.
Some voice whisper'd o'er me,
As the threshold I crost,
There was ruin before me,
If I lov'd I was lost.

Love came, and brought sorrow
Too soon in his train ;
Yet so sweet that to-morrow
'Twere welcome again.
The' misery's full measure
My portion should be,
I would drain it with pleasure,
If pour'd out by thee.

" You, who called it dishonor
To bow to this flame,
If you've eyes, look but on her,
And blush while you blame.
Hath the pearl less whiteness
Because of its birth ?
Hath the violet less brightness
For growing near earth ?

" No—Man for his glory
To ancestry flies ;
But Woman's bright story
Is told in her eyes.
While the monarch but traces
Thro' mortals his line,
Beauty, born of the Graces,
Ranks next to divine."

This strangely beautiful song—the wild, sad, un-
passioned music, so well adapted to the words—the
sympathetic voice in which it was sung, so full of

deep pathos—and finally, the simple, though exquisite grace with which the song and the accompaniment were executed—all struck me forcibly, and for some moments I did not dare to speak my thoughts, fearing to betray my emotion.

“Why, Miss Fitzgerald, you are quite an *artiste*,” I said at length, after thanking her for the song.

“Not much of an artist,” she carelessly replied; “anyhow there is but little art in that simple ballad. But do you know the story on which it is based?” I answered in the negative.

“Well! then, Uncle Maurice shall tell it to-morrow evening. It is one of the most touching of our family traditions. A tale of love and sorrow.* Well! Aunt Ella,” she said in her abrupt way, ‘do you wish to retire now, or shall we stay a little longer?’”

Her aunt replied by standing up; we all, of course, followed her example, and the great parlor was soon left to its gloomy vastness and the darkness and silence of night.

* The air is that of a sweet old song—“Oh! leave me to my sorrow!”



CHAPTER V.

It was bright moonlight that night, and when I entered my room and saw the flood of silver light pouring in through the uncurtained windows, I at once extinguished my candle, and sat down by the window to enjoy the beauty of the night, and indulge, at the same time, the thick-coming fancies that flitted around me. With Longfellow I muttered to myself.

“—— the music of that old song
Throbs in my memory still,”

and its words somehow re-echoed in my heart, filling it with a new and strange emotion. I longed to hear the story of this Desmond, whose love was so unfortunate, and in the host of wild imaginings that crowded upon me, strangely enough the image of my young hostess of Kilorgan would present itself, in odd contrast, amongst the fair and stately dames of her race and lineage, whose smiles were deemed guerdon meet for the proudest feats of knightly prowess in the days of old. Visions of the past and the present floated before my mind. I gazed on the wild, romantic scene around, the hill-tops bright in the moonlight, and the deep blue sky of midnight, whose far depths were as an ocean of peace, studded with islets of light and beauty. A solemn feeling

took possession of my mind, as though I were about entering on a new phase of existence, and I felt my head bowed down, as it were, before some mighty presence. It was a new and strange sensation that pervaded my whole being as I sat there alone in the midnight ; a longing after something which I could not define, a feeling of unrest that yet was not trouble, like the tremulous motion of some bright water gently stirred by the passing breeze. Whilst I thus sat lost in a pleasing *rêverie*, a strain of sweet and solemn music broke the silence of earth and air, opening my window softly, I leaned out, and found that the sound came from a distant part of the house. Listening intently, I soon recognized the voice of Margaret Fitzgerald, singing one of those beautiful Latin hymns to the Virgin which Catholics love so well. It was the *Ave Maris Stella*, sang with such tender expression that as I listened my heart throbbed with a feeling of sensible devotion to her who is truly the Star of life's stormy sea. I thought that in that lone and silent hour angels might have tuned their golden harps to that hymn of praise to their radiant Queen. At last the sweet sounds died away, and I listened in vain to hear them again ; I heard a window closed, and, after lingering yet a little longer, I closed mine, and knelt to say my night prayers with much more fervor than usual. I had not yet retired when a loud knocking at the hall-door woke the slumbering echoes of the old house ; I heard a light foot descending the stairs ; then the hall-door opened,

and strange voices were in the hall. Whilst wondering what all this could mean, I heard the foot on the stairs again, ascending; then, after a few minutes, descending, and the door closed with a dull, heavy sound that shook the old walls. Hastening to the window, I saw in the clear moonlight two female figures, one of which I recognized as Margaret Fitzgerald's, walking rapidly down the avenue. Troubled and anxious I knew not why, I was tempted to follow, fearing lest some harm might befall the young lady. But again I thought that her errand abroad at such an hour might be one that she would not care to have a stranger know, and that my following her might look like prying into her affairs, so I decided on remaining where I was. But as sleep would have been impossible under such circumstances, I resumed my station at the window, and watched with constantly increasing anxiety for Miss Fitzgerald's return. Sometimes I thought that possibly she might not return till morning's light, and that my tedious watch was all in vain; but still I lingered at the window, and at length I saw through the trees the well-known gray cloak and cottage bonnet, and the heiress of Kilorgan approached at the same rapid pace, her quick, light step sounding on the gravelled walk, the peasant girl, as I saw her companion was, following her to the door, and with her a man of sinewy frame, whose tattered garments bespoke the squalid misery of his condition. I heard the door open and close, and saw the man and the girl go away, and it was

with a feeling of relief that I heard the same bounding step upon the stairs, and knew that Miss Fitzgerald was safely housed again. Wondering at what seemed to me so strange an occurrence, I lay down to sleep, nor woke till the morning was far advanced.

The weather had changed during the night, and the next day was dark and rainy. When I met the Fitzgerald family at the breakfast-table, Uncle Maurice greeted me with—"No going away to-day, Mr. Howard! the skies are against you." I admitted the fact, with a secret feeling of satisfaction. "After having staid so long," said I, "I should be sorry to leave without hearing the story of that Earl of Desmond whose song charmed me so much last night. The skies are propitious to me on this occasion, for if the weather were fine I should have felt bound to set out for Dublin. I am anxious to see my cousin as soon as possible."

"You mean the new owner of Kilorgan," said Margaret, her cheek flushing at the thought; "I wonder will he think of turning us out during the winter. Of course, if he intends doing so there is nothing more to be said."

"You would not ask a favor of him?" I said inquiringly.

"That depends on circumstances," she replied; "I should find it hard to ask such a favor from any one, and for myself I would ask it of no one, as it is all the same to me when I leave here,—since leave I must. But"—she looked at her blind aunt, then at

her drooping and infirm uncle—the tears sprang to her eyes, and she could not finish the sentence.

“I understand you, Miss Fitzgerald,” said I, “but you shall ask no favor from my cousin,—I will do it for you, and for myself.”

“You are very kind, Mr. Howard!” she said with a pleased look of surprise; “truly you are a friend in need.”

“Poor Margaret!” said her aunt with tender commiseration.

“Not so poor after all, Aunt Ella,” she replied with something like her wonted gaiety; “if we can only remain here till spring I shall be ever so well content.”

“I think I may venture to say,” I said, “that my cousin will be quite willing to allow you to take your own time in leaving Kilorgan. He must be very unlike what I knew him if he would knowingly put you to any inconvenience.”

“Now, Margaret,” said Uncle Maurice, “did I not always tell you that heaven would raise up a friend for us in our utmost need?”

“You did, indeed, dear uncle! and I am quite willing to give you credit for the gift of prophecy. But now the question is,—as I see you have all finished breakfast,—how are we going to entertain Mr. Howard this dreary wet day?—There will be no stirring abroad, you know, and our old domicile is not particularly cheerful.”

I felt quite resigned to the prospect of a whole day

in-doors with such agreeable companions, and I intimated as much.

"Well! then," said Margaret, "since you are so easily pleased, we will see what can be done to enable you to while away the hours. Are you fond of chess, or backgammon?"

"Yes, I like both occasionally."

"On a wet day in the country—*par exemple*. You draw, I suppose?"

"A little," I replied, amused at her catechizing.

"Very good,—now let us all betake ourselves to the parlor."

"There are few parlors in town or country like yours," I observed; "it is more like a hall, one of the old feudal halls where minstrels were wont to tune their harps in praise of 'fair women and brave men.'"

"As Alfred Tennyson hath it," she rejoined; then glancing with a sigh round the spacious apartment, she added, "it is rather a misnomer to call this a parlor, whereas a parlor is a room of comparatively modern invention, as the drawing-room is, too,—and this apartment is of the old, old style, of a date, indeed, long anterior to the erection of this house. It is truly a baronial hall, almost the only part of the building that reminds you of the ancient state of our family. The house, you observe, is not castellated, or in any way fortified, being erected at a period when the power of the Desmond Geraldines was utterly broken, and most of their possessions in the hands of strangers. Civil war had ceased in the land, the old feudal

system was broken up, and things were settling down into their present peaceful aspect. Landowners no longer required castles to protect themselves and their retainers, but in the houses built at that period, like this of ours, you will generally find something to remind you of the dwellings of our warlike ancestors."

She was leaving the room when her uncle called out: "Why, Margaret, that is true, I forgot to ask you where you were last night? I heard you going out." I listened anxiously for the answer.

"Oh! you heard me, did you? I am sorry for it; I tried hard not to disturb you, and Aunt Ella and I were just preparing for bed when a knock came to the door, and on going to see who it was, I found Kitty Sullivan, Murty Oge's daughter, there in great distress; her mother was taken suddenly so ill that they were all frightened, and knew not what to do, so Kitty ran to let us know, hoping that we could give her something to do her mother good."

"And you went back with her?"

"Of course I did; I took some things with me that I thought might be of service, and hurried away. I found the poor woman in a high fever, I suppose from a bad cold; after a while, however, we managed to get her into a good perspiration, and then I knew the worst was over, so I came away."

"Did you come back alone?"

"No," she answered carelessly, as though it were a matter of perfect indifference whether yes or no ;

"no, Kitty and her father came with me. I did not want them to come, at least Kitty, whom I wished to stay with her mother."

"And you were not afraid," I asked in surprise, "to go out in the dead of night with only a young girl?"

"Afraid?" she repeated almost haughtily; "why should I be afraid by night or by day? Margaret Fitzgerald has nothing to fear at Kilorgan. The peasantry are here our only neighbors, and for miles around there is not one of them who would not give his life an hundred times over to save the daughter of Gerald Fitzgerald from hurt or harm."

"To a descendant of any of the old families," said Uncle Maurice, "Moore's historical ballad of 'Rich and Rare' is still fully applicable. Be her condition what it may, even though it be as low in this world's goods as my poor Margaret's, let her be known as the daughter of a Geraldine, or any other ancient house that ever made common cause with the people, and to this day she might travel alone from Cape Clear to Fair Head, and

" 'No son of Erin would offer her harm.' "

Mind you, I say '*no son of Erin*,' and in this remote district of ours we have happily none other."

I looked with a strangely increased interest on the portionless daughter of proud earls and valiant knights, the conquerors of kings and princes,—the young woman who walked by night and by day in the

protecting shadow of traditionary greatness. And when, after discharging her household duties, Margaret returned, and placing a work-table at one of the windows, took out her sewing, and, as she said, prepared to enjoy a quiet afternoon, I felt a sort of tranquil, dreamy happiness unknown before, steal over my senses as I sat and watched her. Uncle Maurice and I played chess at a window next to that in whose recess she was seated, while Aunt Ella, with her knitting, occupied her usual seat in the chimney-corner, within speaking of us all. The rain fell, and the wind blew without, but the fires blazed and crackled in the wide chimneys within, and the hours flew by in cheerful converse, the comfort within increased by the dreariness without. As if to complete the picture, Bran, the house-dog, made his way unchecked to the parlor, and lay stretched at Aunt Ella's feet, while a motherly Grimalkin, with meditative aspect, sat in front of the fire at the other end of the long hall. It was a home picture peculiar to such a house, and one that fixed itself forever in the memory in its own warm hues of light and shade, its living portraits very fair to look on in their several stages of human life.

We had finished our game of chess, and I had fallen into a *réverie* from which I was aroused by the cheerful voice of the younger Miss Fitzgerald saying: "Well, I do like wet days once in a while, if only for contrast, but I hope to-morrow will be fine, on account of the potatoes."

"Why, even if it is, Margaret," said her uncle, "you know there can be no digging of them done till the ground dries up a little after the rain. You may be sure the men won't come for a day or two after all this rain, even if the weather clears up to-night."

"You think so, uncle?" she replied with an eagerness which surprised me; "I shall be all the better pleased if they don't, and so will Sheelah."

I did not understand her meaning then, but I did an hour or two later when I overheard the young lady telling her aunt in an under tone that she really did not know how to get something for the men to drink when they did come; "our duty-men,* you know, dear aunt, were always well treated in my poor father's time, and even since his death we managed to keep up the old custom, but I declare I am fairly at my wit's end how to do it now. My purse is running very low, and I do not care to go in debt on my own account. Our family debt is too heavy already. What do you think I had best do?"

What the aunt's reply was I know not, for I moved away out of hearing of what to me was a painful revelation.

As evening approached the weather became still worse, and when night closed in the winds were

* Duty-men, in ancient, and even in modern Ireland, are those who, as in the case above referred to, give their labor gratis either from gratitude or any other motive. The phrase, properly understood, is very touching, and very Irish in its peculiar signification.

sweeping in fury down the mountain sides, and the rain fell almost in torrents. I watched eagerly for the hour that should bring us all together round the cheerful hearth; I longed to hear the story of Desmond's hapless love, and, it might be, a song from Margaret Fitzgerald, another of those old-world lays which best suited the place and the time.

The song came sooner than I expected. We had finished the Rosary and taken our wonted places at the fireside, when Aunt Ella said—"What a dreary night it is! only listen to the wind how it moans and howls round about the house, and the rain, how it beats against the casements."

"Yea," said Uncle Maurice, gazing thoughtfully into the fire, "it is like the ghosts of the departed Geraldines wailing over the ruin of their house!"

All at once Margaret began to sing a snatch of the sweet old Scotch ballad—"Are you Sleepin', Maggie?"—the air of which, a very ancient one, is one of the most beautiful in Scottish minstrelsy:

"Mirk and rainy was the night,
No' a star in a' the eary
Lightnings gleam athwart the hft,
An' winds drive wi' winter's fury.
O, are ye sleepin', Maggie?
O, are ye sleepin', Maggie?
Let me in, for loud the linn
Is roarin' o'er the warlock craigie."

She was easily prevailed on to finish the song, and any one who knows the air to which it is wedded, wild and sweet as the breezes that sigh amongst the

Highland fern, may imagine its effect, when sung with such taste and feeling as Margaret Fitzgerald so well knew how to give it. I was sorry when the quaint old song was ended.

"Now, Uncle Maurice," said Margaret, "that is a sort of introduction, and I think not an inappropriate one, to your story of to-night. While the wind sweeps fitfully adown the valley, and our ancient walls quiver and shake in the wintry blast, and the echoes of the old-time melody linger yet above us, commence your 'tale of other days;'—tell us how the Geraldines loved of old."

Mr. Fitzgerald remained a few moments in silent recollection, then spoke as follows:

"Thomas, the sixth Earl of Desmond, was still very young when he succeeded to the title and the vast possessions of his family. He was a young man of fine promise, endowed with all the accomplishments of the time, and in personal advantages was exceeded by few of his race and lineage. He lived in right noble state as became his high name and princely possessions, but had as yet done little or nothing to add to the renown of his ancestors. What he might have done at a later period of his life is now but matter of conjecture; his name is a blank on the Geraldine roll of honor, owing to the circumstances which I am about to relate:

"Earl Thomas was a passionate lover of the chase, and often spent whole days in the mountains with his followers, hunting the magnificent red deer of Ire

land wherewith those wild solitudes still abound. One day in late autumn, having followed the chase all day, he found himself at nightfall,—with the few attendants who had succeeded in keeping up with his fleet courser,—in a lonely valley of that wild region through which the river Feale flows, where the counties of Limerick, Cork, and Kerry come together. He reigned in his charger on the brow of a steep hill, and taking up the richly-adorned bugle that hung at his girdle, he awoke the slumbering echoes of the mountains by a blast both loud and shrill, hoping that the sound might reach the ears of some or all of his straggling followers, and guide them to the spot. An answering sound was heard in more than one direction, borne faint and far on the rising wind, then the chieftain asked his attendants if they recognized the place where they then found themselves. ‘Truly yes, my lord,’ replied his foster-brother, who, as usual, had kept close to his side, ‘an’ I am not mistaken we are near by the dwelling of Teague Oge Mac Cormac, and within a short mile or so of the Abbey of Feale.’—‘Is Mac Cormac’s nigh?’—‘It is scarce a hundred yards from here; were the moon risen, we could see its smoke from where we stand.’—‘Lead on, then, thither; I am tired, and would fain have rest as soon as may be.’ So, leaving two of his attendants to watch for the coming of any of the straggling huntsmen, the young earl followed his faithful guide to the substantial bawn, or square house within a walled inclosure, where Teague

Oge Mac Cormac dwelt in peace amid his numerous family, his cattle and his holding protected from the predatory raids of those days by the potent spell of the Garaldine name.

"On reaching the outer gate of the inclosure, and knocking for admission, Teague himself answered from within: 'Who knocks?'—'It is I, Felim O'Connor, for our lord the Earl, who is here present.' The heavy gate was instantly flung open, and Mac Cormac, with a low obeisance, stood ready to assist the earl to alight, holding the stirrup, as was usual with the feudal vassals of those days. 'A hundred thousand welcomes, Earl Thomas!' said Teague in his native Irish; 'I heard your bugle e'en now on the mountain side.'—'How knew you it was mine?'—'Ah! my good lord, what follower of Desmond knoweth not his master's call by night or day? I could tell the Desmond's bugle note amongst a hundred. But, pray you enter my poor house.'—'That will I,' said the earl, flinging his bridle to a horse-boy. Mac Cormac's sons stood at the door with lighted torches in their hands, and within, their mother, a comely dame, stood ready to speak the words of welcome to the Lord of Desmond. Behind her stood her eldest daughter, a young girl of such rare beauty that of her it might be said as of Ellen Douglas, the fair Lady of the Lake:

"'Ne'er had a na'jad or a grace,
A finer form, or lovelier face.'

"This vision of beauty so entranced the young

earl that he stood for a moment spellbound ; amongst all the high-born daughters of the land never had he seen so fair a maiden. Involuntarily he bowed before her, and from that moment Earl Thomas lived but on the smiles of the fair Kathleen Mac Cormac. When the board was spread for the noble guest his wine was poured out by the fair hand of Kathleen, and to her bright eyes he drained the brimming goblet, as she stood before him in her virgin modesty, with downcast eyes and blushing cheek. His followers, from the lower end of the board, watched with ill-concealed dissatisfaction the rapt attention wherewith their lord regarded the low-born daughter of their host, and the respectful manner in which he addressed her. Did some spirit whisper to them that the young master they so loved and honored was to forfeit lands and titles for the love of that humble maiden,—that his star set in gloom the moment he laid eyes on her fatal beauty ?

“ Next morning by the dawn of day, the faithful foster-brother aroused his lord from sleep, and would fain have persuaded him to set out immediately. But the earl declared his intention of breakfasting where he was, and there was nothing for it but to submit. Again Kathleen served him, her parents, doubtless, pleased and flattered by the young lord’s openly-expressed admiration of their daughter,—little dreaming that anything serious would ever come of it. They probably imagined that it was but a passing fancy, to be forgotten when once out of sight of its

object. Whether their daughter thought so or wished it so, is little likely, considering who and what manner of man her admirer was.

"From that day forth the chase was but a secondary object of Desmond's pursuit; seldom was his bugle heard amongst the mountains, and ever when he did ride forth it was with but one attendant, his foster-brother, who saw with daily-increasing sorrow that the earl's ride led always to Mac Cormac's door, and that once in the presence of Kathleen his hours flew by unheeded.

"At first it would seem that Desmond had no intention of marrying Mac Cormac's fair daughter; he treated her with that dangerous familiarity which showed him mindful of their relative positions, and it was only when Kathleen, by her womanly reserve and dignified modesty, made him understand that her honor and virtue were proof against all temptation, that he began to think seriously of making her his wife. That she loved him was but too plain from her altered and subdued mien, and also from her daily increasing reserve. It was strange that fully conscious as she was of Desmond's passionate love, the fair girl began to droop like a lily bending on its broken stem. At length the secret was revealed, for when the noble Geraldine asked her to become his bride, the color forsook her cheek, and she would have fallen to the ground had not his arm supported her. 'Why this emotion, fairest Kathleen?' he asked. 'are you not willing to be my

wife?'—'Willing?' she repeated; 'oh! my lord, mock not your poor servant by such a question? such a lot, so great happiness, is not for one like me, and I would that you might turn your thoughts to some lady of your own degree.'—'If I wed not you,' cried the impetuous earl, 'ring will I never put on woman's finger. Say but that you love me, that you will be my wedded wife, and to-morrow's sunset shall see you Countess of Desmond, lady of an hundred castles.' But Kathleen sadly shook her head and declared that she would never consent to give her lord so lowly a wife, and Desmond such a mistress. 'Were I even willing to accept your sacrifice,' she said, 'it would avail you little. The proud Geraldine lords would ill brook the marriage of their chief with one so lowly born as Kathleen Mac Cormac. Nay, your very vassals might, perchance, rebel against you, and what would become of your poor Kathleen, should she find herself the unhappy cause of his ruin whom she would freely die to save from hurt or harm? Bethink you, could I live and know myself the fatal cause of your undoing?'

"But all in vain her remonstrances, in vain her protestations; the Desmond was not wont to brook restraint, and the more firmly she resisted, the more eagerly he pursued this one darling object in which his every hope, his every wish was now centered. Like the torrent overleaping or carrying away every obstacle that impedes its course, the wild, ungovernable

passion of the young earl—all the more impetuous that it was secret, at last overcame all opposition, and, his passionate pleadings being seconded by the entreaties of her parents, the pale, fair Kathleen, with a heart full of sad foreboding, gave her hand in evil hour to the lord of Desmond's broad domains. Before the chapel altar, in the neighboring abbey of Feale, a Cistercian monk blessed their union by the dawn's early light, and when the winter evening draped the earth in darksome clouds, the young Geraldine brought home his wife to the Castle of Tralee, and the fairest maid in Munster sat by him on the dais under the silken canopy as Countess of Desmond."

Uncle Maurice paused to draw the scattered brands together on the hearth; I turned to look at Margaret Fitzgerald; she had been listening, it seemed, with as much interest as myself, although the story was not new to her, and her face was shadowed by an expression new and strange to me. There was in her dark eyes a look of troubled thought foreign to what seemed her gay and careless nature.

"Poor Kathleen!" she said with a glowing cheek, "that dream of glory and of bliss soon faded in the darkness of a dreary lot!"

"Even so, my child," said her uncle resuming his narrative, "her prophetic fears were too truly verified. No sooner was the marriage made public than all his kinsmen and the greater number of his followers deserted the youthful earl. All Desmond was in a commotion; the Geraldine chiefs, fiercely indig

nant at what they considered this degrading alliance, called upon the earl to put away his low-born wife; proudly and sternly he refused, whereupon his uncle Lord James Fitzgerald, secretly rejoiced at an opportunity so favorable to his ambition, rallied the friends and followers of the family around him, and took forcible possession of the castles and domains of Desmond. In vain did the gallant young nobleman, with the indomitable spirit of his race, endeavor to defend his rights; three successive attempts did he make to recover his possessions, but he was at length forced to yield to the overwhelming force brought against him, and was even compelled to renounce his title in favor of his uncle."

"And what became of his wife?" I asked with breathless interest; "did he give her up?"

"There is no reason to suppose that he did, for of course, if he had done so, his enemies would not have had such a triumph. It is clear that the proud and brave young noble refused to the last to abandon his wife, for contemporary history tells that he at length retired to Rouen, in France, where he soon after died. No mention is made in any of our annals of Kathleen's after fate, but tradition has it that she accompanied her lord to Normandy, and by her devotion soothed his chafed and troubled spirit, while her tender care ministered to his wants and cheered the gloom of his last days on earth. But his heart was broken, and death soon severed two faithful hearts who had, indeed, 'loved not wisely but too

well.' Such was the origin of Moore's beautiful ballad, 'By the Feale's Wave Benighted;' such the Desmond whose sad pleading song has brought the tear to many an eye, and thrilled many a heart."

"Another proof," I observed, "of the truth of the poet's aphorism that

" 'Love rules the court, the camp, the grove.' "

"But that aphorism relates to the old times," said Margaret archly, "not, at all, to the new,—'men below' are not now-a-days to be so 'ruled.' "

"There I cannot agree with you, Miss Fitzgerald," I said; "to my thinking the human heart is as prone to love now as ever, although the outward manifestations may be somewhat different from what they were in the days of old."

The saucy girl shook her head with a provoking, incredulous air, and her aunt, rising, gave the signal for retiring. The weather was still unchanged, and when we all parted for the night in the long corridor on which our rooms opened, the voice of the wailing wind mingled sadly with our "good night!"



CHAPTER VI.

VERY early next morning, by the first gray light of day, I descended the stairs softly, intending to ring for Sheelah, and leave a message for Miss Margaret, as my hostess, as I purposed setting out immediately for Limerick. As I reached the hall, however, I heard a voice which I knew was not Sheelah's, humming a plaintive air, in the breakfast-room. On drawing nearer I found the air was "The Heart bow'd down with weight of woe," from the Bohemian Girl, and the singer was, as I supposed, Margaret Fitzgerald. She was so busily engaged dusting and arranging the antiquated furniture that I stood some minutes at the door unnoticed by her. I could not help being struck by the admirable symmetry of her figure as she moved to and fro in prosecution of her work, chanting her low, sad ditty the while. I could have stood much longer watching her as she fitted hither and thither about the room, but time was passing, and I knew I had none to spare. So I bade her good morning. She started and turned quickly round: "Oh! good morning, Mr. Howard!" she said in a pretty sort of tremor; "why, I thought you were still fast asleep."

"And I probably would have been but that I was

going to Limerick to-day. I see the weather is again fine."

"You are going to leave us, then?"

"Only for to-day; I hope to return this evening."

"But you surely will not go before breakfast?"

"I meant to do so; you know the days are short."

"Well! but we can have breakfast for you in a few minutes, so you positively must wait."

I consented, nothing loath, and away she posted to the kitchen.

Some fifteen minutes later I was seated opposite Miss Fitzgerald at a plain but comfortable breakfast, and it seemed to me that I never enjoyed a meal so much, although it was hastily dispatched. There was little time for conversation, but somehow the silence pleased me, and I was not disposed to talk; neither, it seemed, was my young hostess. Breakfast over, I hurried away, requesting Miss Fitzgerald to explain my absence to her uncle and aunt.

It was evening, almost night, when I reached the avenue gate on my return, and, as I had done on a former occasion, I stood leaning for a while against one of the gate-piers, musing on the altered feelings with which I now approached Kilorgan. Then, all was vague and misty before me; I knew not who or what I should find in the old manor; now all within and around it rose clear on my mind as some old picture mellowed by time, and the sweetest and most cheering associations were connected with this home of but a few days. Pondering on the change, I

opened the gate and walked up the avenue. The lights were gleaming through the arched windows when I came in sight of the house. Bran, bounding forward, commenced barking, but a word from me served to quiet him, for Bran and I had become excellent friends. He had come from the rear of the house, and, as I had gone some paces in that direction to meet and caress him, I walked on with the intention of passing round the other end of the house to the hall-door. A bright light shone out from the kitchen windows, and, as I passed, I involuntarily cast a glance towards it. What I saw there arrested my steps. It was a large, old-fashioned kitchen, with flagged floor, and a wide, open fireplace, a bake-oven in the wall, and divers large tables. At one of these stood Margaret Fitzgerald, busily engaged kneading dough, which she afterwards spread out into thin cakes, which cakes I recognized as the ordinary oaten cakes of the country, one of which stood baking before the turf fire on the hearth. Her sleeves were rolled up almost to the shoulder, leaving her arms bare, and I could not help remarking that they were beautiful arms, too, white and round and delicately formed. Sheelah was at work near by, and nothing could be greater than the contrast between the two young women; the one bearing about her all the marks and tokens of her high Norman race, every look and gesture bespeaking the culture and refinement of the gentlewoman; the other the personification of the hale, hearty peasant girl, the full-blooded

child of the soil. Again my glance turned to Miss Fitzgerald, and I thought how strange a fate was that which consigned the young and handsome daughter of the Geraldines, accomplished as became her gentle birth, to the menial offices of a poor household. Yet, somehow, whatever she did became her so well that one could hardly regret the necessity which gave her such work to do, and I was forced to admit that she looked no less the lady dusting the breakfast-room by the dawn's gray light or fabricating her oaten cakes than she did when striking the gay guitar to the lay of the lordly Desmond. I turned with regret from a scene which Rembrandt would have loved to paint, and going round, knocked at the hall-door. Sheelah admitted me, and in answer to my inquiry said that "the master and the ould madam" were in the parlor. Sheelah had been taught to curtsy of late, and it was amusing to see how awkwardly she still discharged what was evidently an arduous duty.

My return was welcomed with cordial satisfaction by the brother and sister, and Sheelah was straightway summoned to receive orders to expedite the tea, "as Mr. Howard must be in need of something after his journey." It was not long till Margaret appeared, and when she did, she laughingly shook her finger at me in sportive threat.

"Well, I must confess," said I, laughing, too, "that that is rather a singular salutation even from such an

eccentric individual as the heiress of Kilorgan! I should like to know what it means."

"As if you *didn't* know!—Of course you know nothing about the hamper containing various kinds of liquors, &c., that came this evening from Limerick, addressed to Maurice Fitzgerald, Esq., Kilorgan?"

I was forced to acknowledge that I had sent some little matters of that kind, as I happened to be in town, knowing that her uncle was not able to go at present.

"If you will pardon me the liberty I took, Miss Fitzgerald," I added, "I shall take it as a special favor." I saw that her eyes were full of tears as she turned in silence to her uncle and made a sign for him to speak.

"My dear Mr. Howard," said the old gentleman with his usual quiet dignity, "short as our acquaintance has been, I can hardly look upon you as a stranger. We will, therefore, accept your present in the same spirit in which you make it,—candidly confessing, at the same time, that it comes most opportunely."

I said I was happy to hear it, but, of course, did not say that I knew that before I sent it. Aunt Ella thanked me in her kind, gentle way; a word from her was at any time equal to a whole string of compliments, so earnest and sincere she was, and so little prone to talking.

"And now, Mr. Fitzgerald," said I, as we went to

tea, "I am looking for another story this evening. You see I presume on your kindness."

"Not at all, my dear sir, not at all," he replied, "it is only a pleasure for an old gentleman like me in reduced circumstances," and he smiled sadly, "to speak of the honors and glories of his ancestors. So pray make your mind quite easy on that head. You shall have the story at the usual time."

During tea I told Margaret how I had seen her at her culinary labors. "What a quantity of oaten cakes you make!" I added in a jesting way.

"Oh! you know we shall have plenty of mouths to fill to-morrow," she replied in the same tone; "it requires good store of bannocks to give a dozen workmen enough."

I thought of Farrell O'Driscoll's whispered message, and was not surprised to see that it did not prevent the usual preparations being made for the men's entertainment.

When the quiet hour came that drew our little circle round the pleasant fireside at the north end of the great parlor, Uncle Maurice said:

"As I told you last night a tale of love and sorrow I will change the topic now, and tell you some of the warlike deeds and pious foundations of Maurice, the second Baron of Offaly. I have already told you how that young nobleman succeeded his father, the first Baron of Offaly, whilst still a minor. It is worthy of remark that this Maurice was the first to introduce into Ireland both the Franciscan and Dominican

Orders, with but one year between these important events, and that, too, whilst he was still young, one of his first acts after attaining his majority being the foundation of a house for the first named Order. The Castle of Maynooth had been built by his grandfather, the first Maurice, and from King John this second baron received the grant of Crom Castle, from which was derived the Geraldine war-cry of Crom-a-Boo. Dungarvan Castle was also given him by the same monarch. Dungarvan Castle, however, was afterwards taken from this branch of the Geraldines and bestowed on John Fitz Thomas Fitz Gerald, ancestor of the Earls of Desmond. This Maurice of Offaly was a great warrior; true his victories were chiefly over the native Irish, but with many of the princes and chiefs he was on terms of friendship; the chroniclers quaintly describe him as 'a very pleasant man, inferior to none in the kingdom, and having lived all the days of his life with commendation.' So it was that whilst winning broad lands of the Irish he kept in the good graces of many of them by reason of his pleasant humor and courtly ways. Thus we see that Felim O'Connor, King of Connaught, accompanied him in some of his military expeditions. He was three times Lord Justice or Justiciary of Ireland, and was twice summoned to England and to Wales to assist King Henry the Third against his rebellious nobles. It would seem that the last time he went, he did it with an ill grace, and the king, tired of waiting for his promised aid,

availed himself, it is true, of his services, and those of his friend, Prince Felim O'Connor,—who accompanied him into Wales with their respective forces;—but he very soon after dismissed the Baron of Offaly from the Lord Justiceship of Ireland. Many years after, Maurice, still in the vigor of his years, marched into Tyrconnell, the country of the O'Donnells, whom he had eleven years before reduced to submission, and after a battle in which the Irish were successful, after the fashion of those days, he challenged Godfrey O'Donnell, their leader, to meet him in single combat. The two chieftains met accordingly, and after a long and valiant struggle, wounded each other severely.* From the effects of this wound neither recovered; the Baron of Offaly, however, lived long enough to secure his possessions to his family, and to strengthen them by the erection of new castles. He built one at Armagh and also one at Sligo, both of which have entirely disappeared in the lapse of time. He gained considerable possessions with his wife, a granddaughter of the famous Milo de Cogan, and was in all respects one of the most powerful barons in the realm of Ireland."

"But there is better than that to tell of him!" said

* This Godfrey O'Donnell was a remarkable man for his time. During a whole year that he survived this encounter with Maurice Fitzgerald, although suffering severely from the effects of his wound, he faithfully discharged all the duties of his high office as chief of the Kinel-Conal, and by his own directions, his dead body was borne on its bier in front of the northern clansmen while they gained a great victory over their enemies.

Aunt Ella, with a faint glow on her usually pallid cheek.

"Yes, yes," said her brother, "Maurice was a great church-builder, and a munificent endower of religious communities. I have already told you that it was he who first introduced the Orders of St. Francis and St. Dominick into Ireland. He also founded a Preceptory for the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem at Kilteel, in the county of Kildare."

"*Apropos* to which, Uncle Maurice," said Margaret, "I was much amused once when reading a modern topographical work on Ireland, wherein the writer or writers, speaking of the interesting ruins at Kilteel, part of which are incorporated in a castle built there by the present proprietor, shrewdly surmises that those ruins must have formed part of some religious edifice; what the religious edifice was, the learned topographers could not even guess. I was really provoked to anger as well as to mirth, thinking of all the wealth of glory and romance lying hidden amongst those mouldering relics of the past,—the heroic deeds of how many none may know now of the glorious Knights of St. John. But I interrupted you, uncle;—please go on!"

"The monuments of faith and piety which this Maurice left behind him are not exceeded by any in Ireland. The Abbey of Sligo which he built for the Dominicans, and that of Youghal for the Franciscans, were undoubtedly two of the most beautiful ecclesiastical structures in Western Europe; even in their

ruined state they are still fair though sad to behold, and full of interest alike to the artist and the antiquarian. The Abbey Church of Youghal became in after times the last resting-place of many a warlike lord of Desmond. Tradition tells that when Maurice Fitzgerald of Offaly first commenced the erection of this stately pile, he meant it for a castle. How he came to change its destination I am going to tell you.

"A number of workmen were engaged digging out the foundations, when the baron going to the place one evening to see how the work was progressing, was asked by the laborers for some money to drink his lordship's health. Certainly, he said, they should have it, and telling his son, who was with him, to give the men what they asked, he rode on. Instead of obeying his father's command, the haughty young noble began to abuse the laborers, and even, as it is supposed, went so far as to strike some of them with his whip. This being told to Baron Maurice, he was so grieved to think that a son of his and a Geraldine, a knight, moreover, should have been guilty of so shameful an act, that he vowed a vow to God and good St. Francis that the castle he had purposed building should, in expiation of his son's unchristian and unknighly conduct, be made instead a Franciscan Abbey. How nobly he accomplished his vow the remains of that sacred edifice still attest. Years passed on, and the strength of Maurice's noble manhood began to decline; wounded in the encounter with the chieftain of Tyrconnell, and confined for long

to a bed of pain, he became disgusted with the world and sensible of its nothingness, so, casting off the trappings of pride, the conqueror of many a field, the ex-Lord Justice of Ireland, the captain whose effective aid had twice turned the scale of victory in favor of the English king, exchanged the helmet for the cowl, and the coat of mail for the brown habit of the Order of St. Francis. He retired to the Abbey of Youghal, embraced the religious state, and after years of hard penance died, and was buried under the stately arches he had himself raised in honor of God and the holy St. Francis."

"But was there not another cause for the penitential life on which he entered?" said Margaret. "Had not the tragic fate of the gallant Pembroke something to do with it?"

"It is more than probable that it had, Margaret, although Maurice had, as you know, publicly cleared himself of any participation therein."

"What was the fate of Pembroke?" I asked.

"It is a sad story," said Mr. Fitzgerald, "and is, moreover, one of the greatest blots on the otherwise fair character of the Geraldine of whom we have been speaking, Maurice, the second Baron of Offaly. But as you wish to hear it I may tell it by way of episode." He paused a while as if collecting his scattered thoughts, then resumed as follows:

"Of all the great Norman families who had obtained possessions in Ireland none had as yet in a general way so impressed the native Irish by their

grandeur and magnificence, and also by their lofty and chivalrous spirit, as the De Clares, Earls of Pembroke, heirs and successors of the princely Strongbow. In England they became Earls Marshal to the Crown whilst in Ireland their state was recognized as only inferior to royalty itself; by right of inheritance they were Constables and Lords of Leinster; they exercised a paramount sway over all the English possessions; and were acknowledged as the feudal lords of all the Norman barons, to many of whom they had given lands and castles not a few. They were, indeed, a princely race, think as we may of Strongbow their progenitor. Earl William, or Guillaume, the son of Isabel, daughter of that potent warrior, and Eva, princess of Leinster, had won for himself fair renown on both sides of the Channel, and dying in the prime of his years, was buried in the famous Black Abbey at Kilkenny, which he had himself founded and built for the Dominicans. His brother Richard succeeded him in the proud titles and vast possessions of their house, and truly no nobler knight, no more accomplished noble then graced the Court of England, or shed lustre on the splendid Norman race. All the old annalists describe him as the flower of chivalry, and a model of manly beauty; he was, moreover, endowed with all those great and noble qualities that win the admiration even of enemies, and excite the love and esteem of all the good. Young he was and brave even for that heroic age, generous, frank and open-hearted, a kind master, and a bountiful benefactor.

tor. But alas ! all these fine and noble qualities could not secure him from the malice of those who envied his power and coveted a share of his princely domains. But it was not the Irish who compassed his ruin, they were, to a man, of his own race, Norman knights and nobles every one. How they succeeded in cutting down this stately tree whose grandeur overshadowed all Leinster is what you have now to hear.

"The De Clares of Pembroke, Earls Marshal of England, were as much envied by the other Norman courtiers of Henry III. as they were by his barons in Ireland. But with the king they were all powerful, for Earl William, lately deceased, was his brother-in-law, and had been mainly instrumental in placing him on the throne. Nevertheless a charge of treason being brought against Earl Richard, soon after he had succeeded to his inheritance, he was prohibited by the king from taking possession of his Irish domains until such time as he could establish his innocence. Richard, proudly indignant, disdained to answer such a charge, and sailed at once for Ireland, where he hoped to maintain himself against any force that might be sent against him. And he might easily have done so had the barons who were his feudal vassals aided him as they were bound to do. Little did the proud and valiant earl know what awaited him in the land where he expected to rule almost as a king.

"Earl Richard had not been many days in Ireland

when he was astounded by the news that the king had sent over a charter authorizing the great barons to take and to hold each a certain and specified portion of his possessions. The charter was sent to the young earl, duly authenticated by the king's signature. The shock the sight of this document gave Richard would, doubtless, have been less painful had he known what was really the case, that the charter had been drawn up without the king's knowledge, and his seal surreptitiously obtained to sign it. But Pembroke knowing nothing of this, naturally supposed that the weak and vacillating mind of Henry had been so worked upon by his enemies that he had at last consented to affix his signature to the charter that stripped him of nearly all his possessions. From that moment he became utterly reckless and defiant, and determined to defend his rights at all hazards.

"In this resolution he was strengthened and confirmed by one of the barons, Geoffry Montmaresco, nephew of Hervey, one of the original invaders of Ireland. This crafty, unprincipled man, who had been for years Justiciary of Ireland, and had, during a very long life, made himself infamous by his treachery and falsehood, was now employed by the other barons, De Burgh, Fitz Gerald, De Lacy, and the rest, to persuade Earl Richard to resist the supposed mandate of the king. He played his part so well that Pembroke never suspected him, and, unfortunately for himself, took counsel with him in all his affairs,

regarding him as an old and tried friend of his family, as well as a feudal vassal.

"Secretly apprised by the traitor, Montmaresco, of the young earl's plans, the barons bound themselves together by a solemn oath, and marched to invade the domains of their feudal lord. But Richard was not the man to sit down quietly whilst others possessed themselves of what belonged to him ; he rapidly assembled what forces he could, and not only recovered several of his own castles, but also took some of the royal fortresses. This unlooked-for success disheartened the barons ; they began to discover that the taking of Earl Richard's broad lands was not so easy as they had supposed ; so, in order to gain time, they demanded a conference. To this the generous Pembroke agreed ; he was too brave and chivalrous to delight in the shedding of blood, and would have been well pleased to settle the matter amicably.

"It was on the 1st day of April that the earl and his opponents met by appointment on the Curragh of Kildare. To his surprise Richard saw that the Viceroy, Maurice Fitz Gerald, and the other barons had come attended by a large body of soldiers, whereas he himself, true to his chivalrous character, had only with him a few of his personal attendants, and Geoffry de Montmaresco with a small band of his retainers. The two parties halted at the distance of a mile or thereabouts, and two Knights Templars were employed to transmit their proposals one to the other. The earl on his part demanded the restoration of

such of his lands and castles as still remained in the hands of Fitz Gerald, De Burgh, or De Lacy ; this the barons refused, but urged the Earl Marshal to grant a truce whilst they communicated with the king. Seeing the advantage this delay would give them, Pembroke angrily refused, and threatened to charge upon them, inferior as his force was to theirs, if they did not consent to give up what they wrongfully held of his. At the same time he sent his young brother Gaultier, or Walter, a child in years, off the field with one of his attendants, to be kept in safety in one of his nearest castles. This touching act of brotherly love was scarcely accomplished, and Richard had just put lance in rest to advance against the foe, when the hoary traitor, Montmaresco, quitted his side, and, with his followers, joined the barons, leaving the earl with only fifteen men at arms. This act of cold-blooded treachery was doubtless preconcerted, and it was hoped that, seeing himself left with only his few attendants, the young earl would be forced to accede to the terms proposed to him. The result was the very opposite of what was expected, for no sooner did the gallant young nobleman behold himself deserted by his false friend than the hot blood of an hundred warlike ancestors rushed like lightning through his veins, and, utterly regard less of the consequences, he charged into the very midst of his enemies, closely followed by his faithful attendants, who resolved to save or perish with so noble a master."

"And the cowards slew him at once?" I asked in breathless anxiety.

"Not they, indeed," said Uncle Maurice drily, "they slew him, it is true, but not at once. The barons shrank from imbruing their hands in the blood of their feudal lord, the near connection of Henry III., and also of Alexander II., the reigning king of Scotland, the brother of him to whom Henry chiefly owed his crown; they, therefore, kept aloof, leaving only their hired mercenaries to cope with the young earl, the most valiant knight in the realm of Britain. And truly he justified his high renown, and showed his prowess there as he had often done on many a field of fair Bretagne; he had already struck down a goodly number of the soldiers,—aided, as far as their numbers permitted, by his own brave followers,—when the feet of his courser being hewn off, the noble animal fell with his rider, and a cowardly villain, probably on a signal from some of the barons, stabbed him in the back with a long knife, which, entering at one of the joints of his plate armor, inflicted a mortal wound."

"Oh, shame!" cried Margaret Fitzgerald, pale with emotion, "where was chivalry and knightly faith when that foul murder was wrought on so noble a knight?"

"It was, truly, a foul deed, Margaret," said her uncle solemnly; "what will not men do when self-aggrandizement is their object? The ill fated nobleman was carried insensible to one of his own castles, of which the Viceroy, Lord Offaly, had some time

before taken possession. There he lingered many days before a doctor was sent him, during which time he had been prevailed upon to give up his castles and possessions to the king. When this stroke of policy was effected a doctor was brought but the earl feeling that his end was fast approaching, declared that he would have no other physician than God himself, and, having prepared for death and received the last sacraments, as the old chroniclers tell, he clasped the crucifix to his breast, and calmly yielded his soul to his Maker. Thus died, in the flower of his age and the prime of manly beauty, the renowned and all-accomplished knight, Richard de Clare, the head and representative of the noble house of Pembroke, Earl Marshal of England, Constable and Prince of Leinster, the first of King Henry's nobles. When the news of his death reached England, the king was inconsolable; he ordered Gilbert and Anselm, the earl's two brothers, to be released from prison, caused them to be brought before him, and weeping bitterly when he saw them, knighted Gilbert the eldest, and publicly invested him with the family office of Earl Marshal, together with all the English and Welsh possessions of his house. This was a heavy blow to the barons both in England and in Ireland who had conspired against the De Clares, but a heavier one awaited those amongst them who had hoped to enrich themselves by Richard's death. The king of Scotland, brother-in-law of the deceased earl, demanded that the whole of the

De Clare possessions in Ireland should be restored to the family and equally divided amongst its surviving members, which was done accordingly. Not only that but Maurice Fitzgerald, dreading the vengeance of that powerful family, proceeded to London, and solemnly exculpated himself before the king of any participation in Earl Richard's murder, promising, furthermore, to found an abbey wherein perpetual prayers and sacrifice should be offered up for the soul of the ill-fated earl. This is said to have been the origin of the great Dominican Abbey of Sligo."

"And what about Earl Richard's tomb, Uncle Maurice?" said Margaret.

"Oh! yes, I was forgetting that. He was buried, Mr. Howard, in the famous Black Abbey at Kilkenny, where his brother, Earl William, its founder, had been laid just three years before. On his tomb was placed the following inscription:

"Hic comes est positus Ricardus vulnere fossus
Cujus sub fossa Kilkennia continet ossa."

"In that stately abbey, the monument of the faith and piety of the princely De Clares, Earl Richard's tomb, with those of eighteen other members of his family, remained till the time of Henry VIII., when the Black Abbey, like many others, was violated, and its beautiful church destroyed. In the general ruin and devastation the tombs of the noble dead were not spared, and amongst others those of the De Clares

were utterly broken and defaced. So much for the civilization inaugurated by the Reformation!

"But the sad fate of Earl Richard was long remembered by the poetic and imaginative Celtic peasantry and in their fireside legends he was known as Ryder na Curragh, or The Curragh-killed Knight."

When Mr. Fitzgerald ceased speaking there was a long silence, which no one seemed inclined to break, as each sat lost in the shadowy recollections of the long past ages. At length Margaret started to her feet, reminding her uncle and aunt that their little household would be astir early on the morrow. "So," she playfully added, quoting a translation of Longfellow's, and suiting the action to the words of the first line :

"Cover the embers,
And put out the light ;
Toil comes with the morning,
And rest with the night.

"Dark grow the windows,
And quench'd is the fire ;
Sound fades into silence,—
All footsteps retire.

"No voice in the chambers,
No sound in the hall !
Sleep and oblivion
Reign over all !"

A little while after and the house was silent as the grave.

CHAPTER VII.

THE following day was a busy one at Kilorgan the weather was most propitious, and with the first streak of dawn came Farrell O'Driscoll with a score or so of other men, chiefly young and athletic like himself. I made it a point to be up early that morning, so as to have a peep at the "duty-men" going to work, and as I watched them from the window coming up the avenue with their spades over their shoulders, more eager to begin their gratuitous day's work than if they expected to be well paid for their labor, I could not help thinking how much easier it would be to govern these people through their affections than through harsh and stringent laws. For the first time I felt the force of those words of their national bard—

"There never were hearts if our rulers would let them
More form'd to be grateful and blest than ours."

During the day I willingly accepted Mr. Fitzgerald's invitation to go and see the men at work, and I am free to confess I never saw men work as they did. I was introduced by Mr. Fitzgerald as an English gentleman, and, accustomed as I was to the boorishness of English laborers, I could not help admiring the politeness with which the poor fellows

doffed their "caubeens" and rested on their spades while I spoke a few civil words to them. I believe I quite won their hearts by giving O'Driscoll a sovereign to have them drink Miss Fitzgerald's health.

"See that, now!" I heard one of them say as I moved away—"isn't it aisy seen where the rale quality is?"

"True for you, Neddy," said another, "an' isn't he she fine jintleman all out for an Englishman?"

Mr. Fitzgerald and I exchanged glances, and smiled. We were not supposed to be within hearing, and deferred our comments till we reached the house, where a long and to me interesting conversation followed on the national characteristics of the Irish peasantry and their relations towards the English Government and people.

The remainder of the afternoon I spent with the elder Miss Fitzgerald as she sat in the warm sunlight where her niece had placed her at one of the windows. We saw little of Margaret, except at dinner, and even then she was obliged to leave us sooner than usual, laughingly saying that poor Sheelah had her hands so full of work she could scarce leave her a moment.

"So, Aunt Ellice," said she, "I must leave you the charge of entertaining Mr. Howard, that is, with Uncle Maurice's able assistance. And, good-bye, all, till tea-time, when 'our day's long task' being over and my large family duly cared for, I can sit down and enjoy the evening's rest and quiet."

She vanished, and it seemed to me that like the fair Inez in Hood's ballad—"She took our sunshine with her."

There is such a wondrous charm in the freshness and buoyancy of a blithesome happy spirit, especially if it beam forth in smiling eyes of blue, or black, or brown, and gives life and grace to a fair womanly form. But more potent is the charm when one feels and knows that the brightness of the face and the sunshine of the heart cover depths of care and sorrow deep hidden from mortal eye; that the blight of misfortune has already withered the fairest flowers of that bright young life. Often, as I looked at Margaret Fitzgerald, I kept repeating to myself a stanza of one of Moore's Irish songs which I had heard sung not long before by a high-born English beauty, with a grace and expression that stamped it on my memory :

" Whene'er I see those smiling eyes
So full of hope, and joy, and light,
As if no cloud could ever come
To dim a heaven so purely bright.
I sigh to think how soon that brow
In grief may lose its every ray,
And that light heart, so joyous now,
Almost forget it once was gay."

Mr. Fitzgerald went out in the afternoon to attend to some business about the farm, and his sister and I being left tête-à-tête, I took the opportunity of asking her where her niece had been educated.

"At Rathfarnham Convent, near Dublin," she re-

plied; "poor Margaret, it is not to us she is indebted for the education she received. Her godmother, Lady Berehaven, a school friend and distant relative of her mother, defrayed the expense of her education, and had it conducted on a scale befitting Margaret's lineage rather than her present position and future prospects. My poor sister-in-law often remonstrated with her ladyship on the subject, but the baroness had a will of her own, and a strong one, too, and she had positively made up her mind to have her friend's only daughter educated as though she were her own. We have reason to think that she meant also to make some provision for her goddaughter, but if so, her good intentions were never carried out, for she died very suddenly just as Margaret had left school, and as no will was found after her, her intentions, whatever they might have been, died with her. I often think it would have been better for Margaret had Lady Berehaven left her to what her parents could have done for her in the way of education."

"In ordinary cases it might be so," I answered, "as the modern system of education seems wholly to unfit young girls for the homely pursuits of every-day life, and consequently makes them but too often a burden to themselves and others. But as regards your niece, it is very different. In her education has attained its highest end by fitting her for the discharge of all life's duties, whilst embellishing all by the charm of refined and cultivated taste."

"She is, indeed, a comfort to us all," said Miss Fitz-

gerald in a voice quivering with emotion; "Heaven bless her! what would poor Maurice and I do without her? It grieves my heart to think of what harder trials still she may yet have to undergo. Oh dear! Mr. Howard, what will become of us when we are turned out of Kilorgan? To Margaret I could not say as much, for whenever I hint at any such thing she only laughs, and says she is going to show us then what she can do. But I cannot take it so easy as she does, and Mr. Howard, I lie awake for hours at a time when the world is asleep, thinking of how it will be with us when Margaret may have to support Maurice and myself; and how will the dear child do it? That is the question."

It was the first time I had heard Miss Fitzgerald speak in this way, and I was pained to hear her then. I strove to comfort her by suggesting that, after all, they might not have to leave their old home, that some arrangement might be entered into with the present proprietor, &c., but to all this Miss Fitzgerald only shook her head and sighed; she had evidently little faith in any arrangement that could be made when once Kilorgan had passed to a new owner. I was wholly at a loss what further to say in the way of consolation, and was more than a little relieved by the entrance of Mr. Fitzgerald, who came in tired and exhausted after what was to him unusual exertion. After a little while he proposed a game of chess, and that whiled away the time till the short winter day was near its close, and the last ray of sun-

light vanished from the ancient hall where we three sat together, in the shadows of the past.

With the deepening twilight came a light bounding step to the door, and the bright form of Margaret Fitzgerald stood in the warm glow of the fire-light. "Now I am free," she gaily said, "our men are all at supper in the kitchen in care of Sheelah and Polly O'Driscoll. The worst of it is, we must wait a little longer than usual for tea. But never mind, I will sing you a song *en attendant*."

Taking her guitar she placed herself on the cushioned seat of one of the windows, and sang Mrs. Heman's beautiful canzonet, "Come to the Sunset Tree!" The very air seemed hushed into charmed peace as she sang—

"Come to the sunset tree,
The day is past and gone,
The woodman's axe lies free,
The reaper's task is done.
The twilight star to heaven,
The summer dew to flow'rs,
And rest to us is given
By the cool soft evening hours.
Come! come! come!"

The delicious silence that followed the song was first broken by Margaret's merry laugh as she said, putting away her instrument: "The idea of inviting people on a cold, frosty evening like this to 'come to the sunset tree,' talking the while of 'the summer dew to flowers,' and 'the cool soft evening hours!'

Cool enough, it is true, but not very soft. Well! the winter has its charms as well as the summer."

"And for me," I said, "no summer evening was ever so delightful—no, not even in Italy, or Spain, or Southern France—as these winter evenings round your fireside."

"For which very polite speech, Mr. Howard!" said Margaret with evident satisfaction, "I, as heiress of Kilorgan, humbly thank you. Now for tea, and then for Uncle Maurice's story. Allons!"

"My dear Margaret," said Miss Fitzgerald in her low, soft voice, as she took her niece's arm, "my dear Margaret, what a strange girl you are! Who would think, to hear you rattle on as you do, that you had been working hard all day, and that a heavy load of care was weighing down your heart?"

"Hush! hush! aunt," I heard the young lady whisper; "I don't *want* any one to know."

Alas! for the brave high heart that was keeping its dark sorrows to itself, and shedding light and joy on others!

The evening meal passed pleasantly away, as usual, and when the family prayers were said, and the wood fire crackling on the well-swept hearth, and the cushion carefully arranged under Uncle Maurice's feet, the old man lay back in his chair, closed his eyes a few moments while his mind wandered through the storied past; then he said:

"I told you yesterday evening of the glory and also of the shame of Maurice, the second Baron of

Offaly. When he died in a ripe old age he was succeeded by his son Maurice, who greatly increased the power and possessions of his house by his marriage with Emmelina, daughter of the renowned knight, Sir Stephen de Longespée, grandson of King Henry the Second and Fair Rosamond Clifford, who died in office as Lord Justice of Ireland; Emmelina de Longespée was then one of the wealthiest heiresses in Ireland, her father, Sir Stephen, having married another great heiress, Emmelina de Riddelsford, only daughter and sole heiress of the great Leinster noble, Walter de Riddelsford, Baron of Bray. It was through this marriage with the Lady Emmelina de Longespée that the two castles of Kilkea and Castledermot,—ever after two of the chief strongholds of the Geraldines,—came into their possession. It was in the town of Castledermot that a singular scene took place a few years later, in which Maurice of Offaly was a chief actor. It happened in this wise :

“The deadly feud which for ages existed between the De Burghs and the Geraldines had already reached such a height that the Lord Justice of the day Richard de la Rochelle,—or, as some historians style him, Richard de Capella,—deemed it expedient to bring the heads of the contending parties together, hoping to effect a reconciliation. Castledermot was fixed on as the place of meeting. Thither came the Lord Justice, with his suite, from Dublin : thither, too, came Richard de Burgo, heir to the earldom of Ulster, Theobald Butler, and John de Cogan, and

his allies and friends, with other lords of the De Burgo party, whilst the Geraldines were represented by Maurice, Lord Offaly, his nephew, John Fitz Thomas, afterwards first Earl of Kildare, and others of lesser note, each lord and gentleman attended by the martial train, without which no man of rank appeared in public in those troublous times. It was truly an imposing sight that day in Castledermot, but the meeting was far from answering the expectations of the Lord Justice. The conference was not of long continuance, and Lord Offaly, dissatisfied with the turn affairs were taking, all at once gave orders to his people to seize the Lord Justice, Richard de Burgo, Theobald Burke, and John de Cogan; the stroke was so bold, so audacious, that it struck these lords like a thunderbolt, and before they had recovered sufficiently from their astonishment to offer resistance, they were in the hands of the Geraldine retainers, who were then, when too late, found far outnumbering the united escorts of the other lords. In vain did the Lord Justice remind Fitz Gerald that he was there as the king's deputy; the bold baron replied that the Geraldine was master there. In vain did the fierce De Burgo and the proud Butler storm and rave and threaten vengeance; Baron Maurice laughed their threats to scorn, and curtly dismissing their followers, caused the four lords to be conveyed to one of his strongest fortresses, where he kept them imprisoned till satisfactory negotiations were made for their release."

"And did the king inflict no punishment on Lord Offaly for such a bold and treasonable act?" I asked in surprise.

"If he did," said Mr. Fitzgerald with a smile, "neither history nor tradition says anything of it, and we find from authentic records that this same Maurice, Lord Offaly, was himself elected by the Council as Lord Justice a few years later, when Sir James de Audley, who had held that office, was killed by a fall from his horse. The truth is, Mr. Howard, that the great Norman barons of Ireland were but nominally subject to the English Crown, and at that day the King of England had less power in his realm of Ireland than either De Burgo or Fitzgerald. It was more by policy than by power that the Plantagenet princes retained their hold on that portion of the island which their warlike vassals held by the sword each one for himself."

"They were wild times, those, and wild men!" sighed gentle Aunt Ella; "fond as we are of looking back on the vanished glories of our warrior ancestors, we cannot help feeling that there was much of barbarism in their power and grandeur."

"Even so," said Margaret with a careless toss of the head, "I, for one, am fond of those bold warrior knights of our race and lineage; we have no reason to think that even in their conquests the Geraldines were worse than other powerful families; many of the Irish Chieftains, as well as the Norman settlers, took from their neighbors what they could, and kept it,

too, if they had the power. Like Rob Roy in the Scotch ballad they one and all

“ ‘Follow’d still the simple plan,
That they shall take who have the power,
And they, and they shall keep who can.’ ”

“Yes,” said her uncle, “it must be confessed, Margaret, that the law of *meum* and *tuum* was but little understood, and less practised in those feudal times. But have you heard enough of history for to-night, Mr. Howard, or shall we dwell a little longer on ‘Auld lang syne.’ ”

“If it do not fatigue you too much,” I replied, “nothing will give me greater pleasure.”

He bowed and resumed: “Of Gerald Fitz Maurice, the fourth baron, not much is to be told. He completed the Franciscan Abbey of Kildare, commonly called the Grey Abbey, and founded an abbey at Clane for the same illustrious order to which he seems to have been specially devoted. He was not successful in war, and was taken prisoner by O’Connor Faly, an Irish chieftain. In another engagement with the O’Briens he was wounded, and several of his friends and kinsmen slain. He died unmarried, and left the manor of Maynooth and the territory of Offaly to his cousin John Fitz Thomas. That young nobleman was further enriched by the death of his cousin the Lady Juliana, wife of De Cogan, who left him the manors of Crom, Adare, Castlerobert and Geashill, with their respective castles. About this time Thomas Fitz Maurice, another cousin of the future earl, found-

ed the Franciscan Abbey at Castledermot, the ruins of which may still be seen, and are described by modern Irish topographists as 'having possessed more sumptuousness of ornament and delicacy of finish than the great majority of the minor ecclesiastical buildings of Ireland.*' The same Thomas also erected the Trinitarian Abbey at Adare, better known as that of the Redemptorists, or Order of Mercy for the redemption of captives from the infidel Moors. Thomas is said to have founded this magnificent abbey at the request of Dunbar, Earl of March, who was a friend and patron of this noble order which had obtained the release of two of his followers from captivity. It is gratifying to us Catholic descendants of the Geraldines to know that this noble foundation of the last Barons of Offaly (before that title was merged in the prouder one of Earl of Kildare) has been renovated and repaired by the present Earl of Dunraven, himself a convert to the ancient religion, and is now used for Catholic worship."

"So it is, too," said Margaret, "with the famous Black Abbey in Kilkenny, founded by the De Clares of Pembroke; after lying in a ruined and neglected state for ages, ever since the evil days of Henry VIII.,

* Within a short distance of this beautiful abbey at Castledermot are also visible the remains of a building said to have been an hospital of the Knights Templars. Here are also the mouldering ruins of a priory of Crouched Friars, beautiful even in the last stages of decay,—it was founded by Walter de Riddlesford, in the reign of King John. There is also a round tower in good preservation, and the remains of a fortified wall with four towers.

It has been quite recently restored, and is now again as of old the home of religion and learning."

"Like the phoenix rising from its own ashes," said Miss Fitzgerald; "so it ever is with the true religion, crush and persecute it as you will, its destiny is to rise again in renewed splendor."

I listened with great interest to these remarks, the truth of which struck me forcibly. I thought how in England the Catholic Church is looming up to-day stately and grand after the fiery ordeal of persecution to which it has for ages been subjected. Crushed, and it would seem at times almost annihilated by the penal enactments of many successive reigns, it appears now in beauty and in strength, gathering into its fold from year to year the noblest of the land, with much of its learning and virtue. I was roused from my *reverie* by the voice of Uncle Maurice resuming his narrative:

"It was in the time of this Thomas that the first great disaster fell upon the hitherto fortunate Geraldines. The McCarthys of Desmond, gradually dispossessed of their territories, like other Irish princes and chiefs, by the Anglo-Norman settlers, were continually engaged in fruitless efforts to resist the aggressions of their enemies. It is true the ties of kindred as well as affinity had been at various times contracted between the hostile races, in defiance of English laws. Now the daughter of this Thomas Fitzgerald had married the McCarthy More, but that did not prevent the angry strife from going on be-

tween the Geraldines and the McCarthys. At length, Thomas of Offaly and his son John, as the heads of the southern Geraldines, deemed it necessary, for the maintenance of their power, to make a grand effort against the McCarthys. They accordingly assembled all their kinsmen and their feudal vassals, and led them towards the confines of the McCarthy territory in Kerry in order to give battle to that proud and warlike sept. Had they met in open field it is hard to say which would have gained the victory, both sides being so well prepared and so determined then and there to decide the conquest. But McCarthy More had, it seems, placed an ambuscade on the way by which the Baron of Offaly and his forces were to pass, and so while the Geraldines marched on, little thinking of the snare laid for them, and looking only for the appearance of the enemy in open field, they were suddenly assailed by a shower of deadly missiles from all the neighboring heights which killed several of their leaders, and before they could recover the stunning effect of the shock they found themselves attacked in front and rear by the saffron-shirted warriors of the south, who, raising the fierce battle-cry of the McCarthys, fell on the bewildered soldiery with such fury that scarce even the bravest knights could at first resist their onset. But quickly the wild '*Crom a boo*' of the Geraldines rose loud and clear on the air, and the mail-clad knights rallying their followers, charged fiercely on the kerns and gal-lowglasses of McCarthy. In vain did the proud Norman

nobles put forth all their prowess; hemmed in as they were, they had no control of steed or spear, nor could their archers use their cross-bows, but having recourse to their battle-axes, they wielded them with deadly effect until they fell one by one beneath the ponderous blows of the Irish, and the star of the Geraldines set in gloom on that bloody field. Of eight barons and fifteen knights who rode forth that fatal day with Thomas Fitz Gerald and his son John, not one escaped to tell the tale of the sad disaster. So utterly broken and destroyed was the Geraldine power by that fatal battle,—which was fought at a place called Callan, in the county of Kerry,—that according to the old annalists a Fitzgerald dared not put a plough in the ground for twelve years after in the country of Desmond. It was a sad day for the Geraldines, and it was the proud boast of the McCarthys that they had cut off the race, root and branch. And so, indeed, it seemed, but Heaven had willed it otherwise. A scion of the house still remained to inherit the honors and titles of his ancestors."

"Oh! you mean Thomas *An Appagh*, Uncle Maurice?" said Margaret. "And thereby hangs a tale, Mr. Howard, a heraldic tale so to say, being the legend which accounts for the ape or monkey in the Fitzgerald arms."

I expressed my desire to hear it, whereupon Mr. Fitzgerald, with his wonted good nature, resumed:

"On the day when the flower of the Geraldines fell at Callan an unconscious babe lay in its cradle in Tralee

Castle, surrounded by all the assiduous care usually lavished on the children of the rich and noble. That babe of nine months' old was the first-born child of John Fitz Thomas, the heir of Offaly, slain with his father that dreary day not many miles distant from the towers whence his young wife looked out in vain for his return, and his infant son lay in the happy unconsciousness of life's early dawn. John was his father's sole surviving son, and by this crushing blow there was none left of the direct line but the helpless babe who as yet could neither speak nor walk. You may imagine the terror and confusion that reigned in the Castle of Tralee when word was brought thither that the baron and Sir John were both slain, and with them the chief men of their race. It does not appear that Sir John Fitz Gerald's wife was in the castle that day, for of her history and tradition are both silent. The story goes that the household, fearing that the McCarthys would follow up their bloody victory by destroying the castle and all in it, rushed out pell-mell, resolved to seek safety in flight. Even the child's attendants in their terror forgot their precious charge, and hurried away with the other servants, leaving the poor infant entirely alone and unprotected. The fugitives had not gone far, however, when they remembered that the young heir of Offaly had been left in the castle. After a short debate amongst themselves, the nurses, with some others, ventured to return, but only to find the cradle empty and the child nowhere to be seen.

Whilst filling the air with their lamentations, the nurses were suddenly called outside the walls to witness a strange sight: on one of the highest towers of the castle was seen an ape which had long been domesticated in the house, holding in his arms the unconscious infant who was the heir of many a broad domain. The terror of the spectators is easily imagined, for it seemed as though the young lord might any moment fall a mangled corpse at their feet. Vain were all their efforts to reach the agile creature which seemed to take a malicious pleasure in eluding pursuit; but, after a while, he quietly descended the tower staircase, and going straight to the place whence he had taken the child, laid it again in its cradle without its having sustained the slightest injury. Another version of the story is that it was on the occasion of a fire in the castle that the infant heir, forgotten by his attendants, was saved by an ape. The former is, I think, the historical account of the occurrence. Ever since then both branches of the Geraldines have had an ape or monkey for their crest."

So ended the narrative for that night, and as Mr. Fitzgerald and his niece were both more or less fatigued, we all retired soon after.



CHAPTER VIII.

On the following day Uncle Maurice and I walked out after breakfast; the day was clear and bright, and were it not for the leafless trees and the faded, brownish herbage you could scarce realize the fact that autumn was already merging into winter. It is true we saw all around us the "meadows brown and sere," but otherwise there was little to remind us that "the melancholy days were come, the saddest of the year." In Ireland, however, the greenness of the verdure never wholly departs; even the frosts of winter can scarce dim the lustre of the emerald sheen that all the year round bedecks the fair land.

As we strolled along in the bright sunshine we spoke of many things; at last the conversation turned on the melancholy topic of the sale of Kilorgan. "By-the-bye, Mr. Howard!" said Mr. Fitzgerald, "my niece requested me to ask if you have heard from your cousin. We can nobow account for the delay in his taking possession, unless it be your kind interposition. Now, I received a legal notice of the sale several days ago."

"And that is all that will be done probably for some months," I replied, "for I wrote to my cousin from Limerick the other day, and I know he will leave matters as they are during the winter."

"But we shall have to pay him rent for the time we occupy the house," said Mr. Fitzgerald, "and your cousin may expect more than we shall be able to pay."

"Mr. Fitzgerald," I said, stopping short and looking him full in the face, "do you believe in me as a friend?"

"I do, God knows I do!" he replied with strong emotion; "short as our acquaintance has been, I feel that you are one on whom I would rely under any circumstances. But what can you do in this matter?"

"I can do all you would have me do: I can put off as long as your convenience requires the necessity of your leaving Kilorgan. My cousin will not, I may say could not, refuse any request of mine. Will you, therefore, my dear Mr. Fitzgerald! assure the ladies on my responsibility that they are to consider themselves for the winter months, at least, as much proprietors of Kilorgan as they ever were!"

"How can I thank you, Mr. Howard?" said Mr. Fitzgerald, after a long pause, shaking me at the same time by the two hands.

"By saying nothing about it, and you will thereby do me a favor. You really owe me nothing, and you would only pain me by expressions of gratitude. But I fear I must leave you soon: apart from the awkwardness of my position here, asking hospitality for one night as a belated traveller, and coolly remaining for many days as a visitor,—my presence will very

soon be required in London on business of some importance."

"I am very sorry to hear it," said Uncle Maurice, with unmistakeable sincerity; "I had hoped that you would stay a few weeks longer with us. Not that we have much inducement to offer, but then we are all selfish creatures, and it is so natural for us to place our own enjoyment first. I know sister Ella and my niece will miss you, too,—indeed, we all will."

"And think you, my dear Mr. Fitzgerald, that I will not miss you all? think you that I can find elsewhere the same degree of quiet enjoyment I experienced here? I shall look back, I assure you, on the few tranquil days I have spent at Kilorgan as amongst the happiest of my life."

Just then we caught sight of Miss Fitzgerald and her niece, who were also, it appeared, tempted abroad by the brightness of the sunshine. Quickening our steps, we soon met them, and we all four continued our walk together. Miss Fitzgerald took my arm, and Margaret walked on beside her uncle, chatting pleasantly as was her wont on all manner of subjects.

"Uncle Maurice," she said all at once, "did you ever take Mr. Howard to the cave?"

"Indeed, my dear, I did not; I forgot all about it."

"Very well! we will go there now. I am glad we met you. I often take Aunt Ella up there to sit a while in the sunshine. Come, now, I will lead the way. But I fear, Uncle Maurice, the ascent would fatigue you too much."

"I think it would, Margaret," he replied; "so I will stay here till your return, or, perhaps, I may walk slowly towards the house."

In a few minutes Aunt Ella and I were ascending, with Margaret, a rugged path that ran close by the side of the mountain stream before alluded to. After following its wayward course for a couple of hundred yards up, up amongst the hills, we came all at once to one of the wildest and most solitary spots I had ever seen, with only bleak hills around, and the blue sky above, and the brawling brook, with its ceaseless song, murmuring on forever. Here and there a few stunted arbutus bushes dotted the hill-sides, their berries gleaming red and bright through the dark green foliage, intermingled here and there with the prickly furze, bare and unsightly then, shorn of the gaudy yellow flowers which all summer long make the waste places gay and smiling. Not even a distant prospect connected the place with the outer world; shut in by still higher acclivities rising on every side, it looked like the bed of some dried-up mountain lake. All was solitude and silence, the latter broken only by the gurgling of the stream as it went dancing and glancing on its way.

The wild solitude and lonely grandeur of the place impressed me so strongly that I stood some moments silent, gazing around in wonder and admiration. At length I turned to Margaret Fitzgerald; she was evidently enjoying my surprise.

"Why, Miss Fitzgerald," I said, "you have here a

very temple of solitude; in Alps, or Appenines, or Pyrenees, I have seen no place more utterly wild and lone."

"I thought you would like it," she said carelessly, "but you have not seen all." She turned into another path which led round a shoulder of one of the highest hills, and stopped at what seemed at first sight a little shrubbery of arbutus overtopped by a large hawthorn which had grown out from the steep hill-side in a bending position. When I, with her aunt, reached the spot where Margaret stood, she pointed with a sort of triumphant gesture to an opening in the rock, at the same time putting aside the bushes with both hands, and I saw what was evidently the mouth of a cave. A large stone, some two or three feet in height and flat at the top, stood at one side of the aperture, half concealed by the overhanging branches, forming what seemed a natural seat.

"Now, Aunt Ella, sit you down and rest," said Margaret, and she carefully placed her aunt on the stone bench. Then turning to me she asked how I liked her solitude.

"You may well call it so," I replied, "it is like enchantment."

"Say, rather, it is like religious seclusion and you will be near the mark. Know, then, that this cave was once the abode of a holy hermit whose life, spent in prayer and meditation, so edified the people of the adjoining country that they regarded him as a saint,

although it does not appear that he was ever canonized."

"Is the cave large?" I inquired.

"Not more than eight or ten feet long by some twelve or fourteen feet wide. On the rocky wall of the interior, there opposite the entrance, a rudely cut cross is still visible, that is to say when you are long enough in the cave to become accustomed to the dim light. It is a lovely spot in summer time, and many of my spare hours are spent here, drawing or reading; when Aunt Ella feels able she comes with me and sits knitting on this stone in the cool shade of the overhanging hill, while I either read aloud, sit drawing beside her, or ramble about in search of plants for my herbarium. Once in a while, but not often, Uncle Maurice has managed to come up with the help of one of our working-men. Oh! we have rare times here in the bright summer days when the heath is blooming on the hills, and the furze is bright and yellow, and the Irish hill-fern nods on every side like some plumed and stately warrior of old time!"

"Poor Margaret!" said her aunt, with a glow of feeling on her pale cheek, "it is well for you that you can find enjoyment everywhere!—your 'rare times,' my dear, would be sorry times, indeed, to the ladies of the present day!—a fashionable lady would be shocked at you!"

"And who cares for such fashionable ladies, Aunt Ella? Not I, I am sure; they go their way, I go

mine, and their city manners would as ill become me, as my rustic ways would them."

"Rustic ways!" I repeated to myself, and I smiled, remembering the time not so long ago either, when I had regarded Margaret Fitzgerald as a country girl.

"If yours be rustic ways, Miss Fitzgerald," I almost involuntarily said, "it were much to be desired that our city belles should become rustic."

"Oh! you flatterer!" she said, shaking her finger at me, and laughing gaily then resuming her usual manner she said—

"Seriously, Mr. Howard! was not this a most fitting place for religious meditation?"

"Yes; I cannot imagine any spot better adapted for the ceaseless communion of man with God, and the contemplation of the Deity in His works. But I have generally observed that the monks and anchorites of old selected their abodes with rare taste and discrimination. Wherever I have travelled I have seen even the ruined remains of the oldest monastic edifices occupying sites which to-day a poet or a painter would choose for a habitation."

"Yet those were the ignorant monks," said Margaret archly, "and the times in which they lived are called 'the dark ages.' Well! who can wonder when the men of this age call it the age of progress and the age of light, that they should look upon the ages of faith as dark ages? These are surely the opposite of those, the antipodes, so to say. But have

you seen enough of this place, Mr. Howard . if so, we had better be moving homewards as my aunt is long enough out for to-day."

"And besides, Margaret, it must be drawing near dinner hour. Another very cogent reason for our returning home."

We found Uncle Maurice enjoying a comfortable nap by the fireside. He was much pleased with the admiration I expressed for his niece's summer retreat as he called it, and the time passed pleasantly away in conversation with him—the ladies having retired—till Sheelah came to announce dinner. The meal over, I walked out again, determined to make the most of the little time that remained to explore the neighborhood. It was nightfall when I returned then came tea, the evening prayers, a song from Margaret,—I remember it well, it was a melancholy ditty, beginning "I would not die in Summer Time," then she sung at my request the exquisite Scottish ballad "The Flowers o' the Forest," to which her voice gave even increased pathos and sweetness; that naturally led to a conversation on the state of Scotland after the disastrous battle of Culloden, a state of which that rare old song is descriptive, the "flowers o' the forest" being the gallant Scottish nobles who fell around their king on that fatal field—

"The flowers o' the forest are a' wed awa'."

We talked long of the chivalrous and romantic character of the king who fell at Flodden, the Scottish

Haroun Al Raschid, as he has been not inaptly called of Aytoun's noble poem "Edinburgh after Flodden," and the painfully graphic account it gives of the heroic end of that accomplished prince. What a glow of enthusiasm lit up the face of Margaret Fitzgerald as she repeated the words of Randolph Murray in reply to the question of the brave old provost:

"But speak! how fought the citizens
Within the furious fray?"

"No one failed him! he is keeping
Royal state and semblance still,
Knight and noble lie around him
Cold on Flodden's fatal hill.
Of the brave and gallant-hearted
Whom ye sent with prayers away,
Not a single man departed
From his monarch yesterday.
Had ye seen them, O my masters!
When the night began to fall,
And the English spearmen gather'd
Round a grim and ghastly wall!
As the wolves in winter circle
Round the leaguer on the heath,
So the greedy foe glared upward,
Panting still for blood and death.
But a rampart rose before them,
Which the boldest dared not scale;
Every stone a Scottish body,
Every step a corpse in mail.
And behind it lay our Monarch,
Clenching still his shiver'd sword,
By his side Montrose and Athol,
At his feet a southron lord.
All so thick they lay together,
When the stars lit up the sky

That I knew not who was stricken,
Or who yet remained to die."

There was a short silence, then Mr. Fitzgerald observed: "What Flodden was to the Scottish nation, Callan was to the Geraldines and their vassals. And that reminds me that I am forgetting my story of this evening. Now, let me see what I am going to tell you." He sat for a while in silent recollection, then commenced in these terms:

"That Thomas A Nappagh of whom I told you yesterday evening, Mr. Howard, was the father of two sons* who, having grown to manhood, became renowned warriors, mighty men in their generation, yet fierce and turbulent withal, like most of the nobles of that age. By aiding the king to maintain his authority in Ireland, and taking sides alternately with Irish chiefs and the other Anglo Norman nobles, they both acquired vast possessions in addition to those which already owned their sway. John, moreover, was created Earl of Kildare, and Maurice, Earl of Desmond, the territories of each being erected into a palatinate. From that time forward the Geraldine power assumed a new phase, and the two great branches which then sprang from the parent stock speedily grew into stately trees overtopping all-around them. Over the fairest counties in Leinster, John Fitz Thomas reigned as a king, and his descendants

* Some historians make the two first Earls of Kildare and Desmond cousins, whilst several others make them brothers as in the text.

after him for ages long, while Maurice ruled as royal over all Desmond, and founded a race of warlike nobles whose destiny it was to become part and parcel of the Irish people, making common cause with them against the English oppressor, and when a new religion brought further cause of dissension, clinging to the old religion with true Irish fidelity. Be their faults what they may the Desmond Geraldines were ever true to the faith of their fathers during the whole course of their history as a separate race. Those of Kildare were, on the contrary, more generally on the side of authority, and in the course of time embraced the new religion. I am now going to tell you how John, first Earl of Kildare, obtained the broad domains which had previously belonged to William de Vesci, at that time Lord Justice of Ireland.

“John Fitz Thomas Fitz Gerald, having done good service to the English king during the invasion of Ireland by Edward Bruce, was well esteemed by Edward I., who then swayed the sceptre of the Plantagenets; but there was another Anglo-Irish lord who stood still higher in the monarch's favor, and that was De Vesci, Lord of Kildare. Now the lands of Fitzgerald and De Vesci bordering on each other,—for the district then known as Offaly is now a portion of the county of Kildare,—there was a long standing strife between them on account of some aggressions one had made upon the other, both being, it is probable. equally to blame,

for in those days, we know, every man's hand was against his neighbor. It so happened once that being in open court in Dublin, De Vesci publicly accused the Baron of Offaly of being the sole cause of the disturbances existing in their section of the country, at the same time throwing some reflections on his loyalty. The baron hearing of this, went to the castle, and there, in presence of the Lords of the Council, told De Vesci that he was endeavoring to get up a charge of treason against him, so that by shedding his blood he might get his lands into his clutches, so that he might make his son 'a proper gentleman.' At this taunt, De Vesci fired up. 'A gentleman!' he cried; 'thou bold baron, I tell thee, the Vescis were gentlemen before the Geraldines were Barons of Offaly, yea, and before that Welsh bankrupt, thine ancestor, feathered his nest in Leinster.' 'As for my ancestor,' replied Fitz Gerald, 'whom you term a bankrupt, how rich or how poor he was when he came to Ireland, I will not now debate, yet this much will I say that he came hither as a buyer not as a beggar. He bought his enemies' lands with his blood. But you lurking like a spider in his cobweb to entrap flies, endeavor to secure the lands and livings of your fellow-subjects wrongfully by despoiling them of their lives, trumping up charges of treason and such like. I, John Fitz Thomas Fitz Gerald, Baron of Offaly, do tell thee, William Vesci, that I am no traitor, nor felon, but that thou art the secret upholder of the king's enemies. This will I

prove before the king's majesty, to whose judgment I appeal.' The dispute was accordingly carried to London, and soon after the two lords appeared before Edward I., each prepared to defend his own cause. But even there the same proud vindictive spirit manifested itself on one side and the other, and even the presiding presence of the stern and warlike king could not restrain their impetuous ire. It was the scene of the Council Chamber in Dublin repeated with little variation. Each accusing the other of traitorous dealings with the king's enemies, and, Edward being at a loss how to decide between them, the Baron of Offaly thus ended the dispute :

" 'Now, inasmuch as our mutual complaints stand upon the one's Yea and the other's Nay, and that you would be taken for a champion, and I am known to be no coward, let us, in God's name, leave lying for varlets, bearding for ruffians, booking for scriveners, pleading for lawyers, and let us try with the dint of swords, as become martial men to do, our mutual quarrels. Wherefore, to justify that I am a true, subject, and that thou, Vescei, art an arch traitor to God and my king, here, in the presence of his highness, and in the hearing of this honorable assembly, I challenge the combat.'

"The proposal was applauded by all present; De Vescei accepted the challenge, the king appointed the day for the combat, and all England and all Ireland waited in anxious expectation for the meeting of these two valorous nobles. But behold! when the

day arrived De Vesci was not forthcoming; the Baron of Offaly rode into the lists armed *cap-a-pie*, and with lance in rest, but the challenge delivered aloud by his herald remained unanswered, De Vesci did not appear, and it was ascertained that he had gone to France. Thereupon King Edward the First declared the Baron of Offaly innocent of the treasonable offences whereof he stood accused, and further added: 'Albeit that De Vesci hath conveyed his person into France, yet he hath left his lands behind him in Ireland; these lands I do hereby grant to John Fitz Thomas Fitz Gerald, Baron of Offaly, and to his heirs forever.' Very soon after that memorable occasion John was created by the same sovereign Earl of Kildare, the entire of that county having thus passed into his possession. This was the origin of what we must, I suppose, consider the chief branch of the Geraldines, not only because of the unbroken splendor that has ever since surrounded the house of Kildare, its uninterrupted and almost unexampled prosperity, but because it still exists in the Dukes of Leinster and Marquises of Kildare. He was a man of rare ability as well as great prowess, that first Earl of Kildare."

"Yes, you know what the Irish poet, Murdoch O'Daly, says of him," said Margaret with a smile; "how is this he words his quaint eulogium on John Fitz Thomas?" Oh! I remember it now:

"John the redoubtable,
Than whom no poet was more learned,

The first Leinster Earl without reproach,
The high-minded man, to his engagements true.

"It is from John, then, the noble man,
That they the heroes of Leinster descend;
Men whose valor never fails
When the shafts of spears are in battle bent."

"Oh! as to that," said her uncle, "we must take O'Daly's praise of the Geraldines with a grain of salt: he was a clansman of the Desmonds, and in becoming a learned Dominican lost nothing of his fond devotion to the race which had fostered him and his. His glowing eulogies on the faith and piety of the Desmond Geraldines, and the greatness and power and princely qualities which were theirs in common with those of Kildare, go but to prove that in the districts conquered by, or granted to, the Geraldines, the native clans became their warm adherents, and clung to them in good and evil report as they did to few, if any, of the other great Norman families. But it really appears that the first Earl of Kildare was a remarkable man for the age in which he lived. He, however, enjoyed his new dignity only two months."

"And his son Thomas, the second earl," said Aunt Ella, "is described as 'a wise and prudent man.'"

"Yes, and to him it was given," said her brother, "in common with Maurice, first Earl of Desmond, to crown the prosperity of their race, by a matrimonial alliance which surpassed in splendor all the connections hitherto formed by the Norman lords of Ireland."

"What was that?" I asked.

"The marriage of the Earls of Kildare and Desmond to two daughters of the most powerful nobleman in Ireland, Richard de Burgo, Lord of Connaught and Earl of Ulster, then and since commonly called the Red Earl, and undoubtedly the greatest man of the De Burgo race in Ireland. The marriage was brought about in this way:

"War had been some time carried on with great fierceness between two rival brothers of the royal house of O'Brien, each of whom laid claim to the principality. The cause of one was espoused by Earl Richard, while the Geraldines, both of Desmond and Kildare, took sides with the other. The De Burgos and Fitz Gerald's, thus once again pitted against each other, carried on the war with all the fierce energy and determination which marked their character. For some time the issue was doubtful, but fortune, at length, declared for the Geraldines and their ally Dermot O'Brien. De Burgo, defeated but not humbled, still maintained his bold and haughty front; he refused to make any concessions to his hereditary rivals, either for himself or his ally, Donogh O'Brien, and war seemed again on the point of being renewed with increased fury, when the Lord Justice of that day, Sir John de Wogan, thought of a plan which, if successful, might restore peace. The Earls of Kildare and Desmond, whether bachelors or widowers, were both unwedded at the time, and the astute Lord Deputy suggested to these lords, and also

to the Earl of Ulster, a matrimonial alliance. To this proposal both parties willingly acceded, and at Green Castle, on Carlingford Bay, the double marriage took place at the same hour before the same altar. Then and there did Thomas, Earl of Kildare, espouse the Lady Joan de Burgo, whilst Maurice, Earl of Desmond, took her sister, the Lady Margaret, for his wedded wife. The elder sister of these two illustrious ladies had a short time before married Robert Bruce, King of Scotland. That day we may consider as one of the brightest and most auspicious in the Geraldine annals."

"Heigho!" said Margaret, with a gaiety which could not be otherwise than assumed, "all that grandeur and power of the Geraldines which there reached, perhaps, its highest point, is less to us now than the dream of last night. Still, it serves both to point a moral and adorn a tale, and is, therefore, worth something. Come, Aunt Ella!—Mr. Howard, I wish you good night—and dreams," she added with a smile that was both sad and sweet, "dreams of the old Geraldines!"

"Rather of the new," I said within myself as I followed her with my eyes while she led her away from the room.



CHAPTER IX.

THE following day was a beautiful one for the season ; clear and bright, yet soft and balmy. As we took our seats round the breakfast table, with the early sunbeam gilding the quaint furniture and resting lovingly on the face of the fair lady-shepherdess in the ancestral picture behind Margaret's chair, over the high, antique fireplace, the cheerful voice of chanticleer suddenly broke on the stillness without, reminding one of

“ The Horn of Chase so gaily sounding.”

“ Ah ! we are going to have a fine day,” said Margaret, as she handed me my second cup of tea ; “ I thought as much, and so I have been preparing this morning, since very early, for an excursion to Adare. As Mr. Howard is about leaving us, he must see Adare before he goes. So to-day, as the weather is fine, we shall visit that ancient seat of Geraldine splendor. That is, good people, if you are all quite willing.”

Every one answered in the affirmative. “ Very well, then,” said Margaret, “ I have sent to borrow a jaunting-car—a real ‘Irish jaunting-car,’ Mr. Howard ! and we shall start early, as the days are short, and we want to have all the daylight we can.”

An hour after we were whirling along the high road to Adare as rapidly as the hilly character of the country would permit. Margaret and I sat on one side of the homely conveyance, while Mr. and Miss Fitzgerald occupied the other, we and they back to back. It was a pleasant drive through that lovely region of alternate hill and vale, and wood and water; now following the course of the silvery Maigue; now losing sight of its winding stream amid the intervening hills. There was scarcely a remarkable spot we passed of which Margaret had not some old-time legend to tell; now quoting snatches of the quaint old ballads of some local poetaster; now bringing forth from the storehouse of memory some half-forgotten legend heard in childhood. A spell was on me as I listened, and I felt as one whose hours flew by in a summer night dream, bright, serene, tranquil. No cloud was in the sky, no wind stirred the dry, leafless branches, but here and there some songster of the grove, tempted abroad from his winter quarters by the balmy freshness of the sunbright air, warbled his merry lay high up among the boughs. It was one of those days one sometimes meets in the dull routine of life when all that is drear and darksome in the past is forgotten, and the future shines in brightness reflected from the present. No thought of gloom or apprehension clouded my mind, and I willingly gave myself up to the *laissez aller* of the hour as we swiftly rolled along the smooth turnpike road on which we entered within a short distance of Adare.

As we entered the little secluded town, and drove along its quiet street, I thought I had never seen anything more calmly beautiful than the surrounding scene. On one side rose above the river bank an ancient castle of the Desmonds, gloomy and majestic still, with the river flowing into its broad, old fosse. Before us flowed the beautiful Maigue, under an antique bridge of nine arches, from the battlements of which festoons of ivy fell nearly to the water edge; beyond the river lay swelling lawns, and behind them rose the dark woods of Lord Dunraven's beautiful demesne, through the vistas of which were seen the broken arches and ivied windows of a ruined abbey which once belonged to the Franciscans. To the right of the view another monastic ruin reared its venerable head above the ivy and alder that clustered round its walls. Farther on, at the very extremity of the village, was seen the once famous abbey of the Redemptionists, or the Order of Mercy, its walls recovered from the empire of decay, and crowned by the emblem of salvation, denoting the temple of prayer and sacrifice. It was a lovely scene, even though "winter chilled the day," and I involuntarily exclaimed—"What a paradise of beauty this must be in summer!"

"Yes," said Margaret looking round with an exulting smile, "Adare is not so bad for an Irish village. You know how Gerald Griffin apostrophizes it?"

I said I was ashamed to say that I did not.

"Here are his words, then

"Oh! sweet Adare, oh! lovely vale,
Oh! soft retreat of sylvan splendor,
Nor summer sun nor morning gale
Ere hail'd a scene more softly tender.
How shall I tell the thousand charms
Within thy verdant bosom dwelling,
When lull'd in Nature's fostering arms
Soft peace abides and joy excelling.

"Ye morning airs, how sweet at dawn
The slumbering boughs your song awaken,
Or linger o'er the silent lawn
With odor of the harebell taken.
Thou rising sun, how richly gleams
Thy smile from far Knockferna's mountain,
O'er waving woods and bounding streams,
And many a grove and glancing fountain.' "

"Gerald Griffin, you must know," she added, "was a native of these parts; we of Limerick and the Shannon are proud to claim him as, perhaps, the first of Irish novelists, and one of the first of Irish poets, truly and intensely Irish, and more than most literary men or women of this age representing in his genius the national characteristics. Oh yes, we all love Griffin, and we fondly call him our gentle Gerald."

"With his novels I am familiar," I replied, "and also with his noble tragedy of Gysippus, which I have seen performed before an admiring audience in Drury Lane Theatre, London, but I regret to say that I am not acquainted with his poetry."

"You shall be acquainted with it, then, before you leave Kilorgan," she replied in her impulsive way, "you must learn to know the chief man amongst our

Munster bards in modern times. But we are forgetting our lunch, Uncle Maurice," turning to him "where shall we take it?"

"I suppose at the Franciscan Abbey"—whither we went accordingly, driving through the Quin demesne till we reached that beautiful and proud memento of the Geraldine's faith and piety. Seating ourselves on fragments of the ruins, we partook of the collation prepared by the fair hands of Margaret, enjoying the while the sylvan beauty of the scenes around, and talking of the old-time memories that made it classic ground. Alas! for the gentle lady whose eyes were darkened to the blessed light, and to all the beauty of earth and sky.

"Poor Aunt Ella!" sighed Margaret, "to think that you cannot see what we see, these solemn wintry woods, yon ancient stronghold of our fathers, these stately ruins of the abbeys they founded, the bright river that so often mirrored their martial forms,—poor Aunt Ella! all is lost on you!"

"No, my dear, not all," Miss Fitzgerald replied, soft and low; "I can imagine all these things, though I may not see them; I can hear the rooks cawing in the ancient woods, and the river rolling by, and I can feel the freshness of the air, and the faint warmth of the sun. No, my child, all is not lost on me, and I am thankful for the many blessings I enjoy."

We were all silent for a while, then Mr. Fitzgerald said. "Looking around you here, Mr. Howard, how strangely varied are the associations connected with

the place. within this secluded vale we behold the mouldering remains of three stately abbeys, and the proud castle which protected them. We may well imagine with the poet—

“‘What gorgeous shrines, what Brehon lore, what minstrel feasts
there were

In and around” this “palace-filled Adare,”

when yonder fortress was a favorite dwelling of the great Earls of Desmond in the zenith of their power. And long before the Geraldines bore that proud title, whilst still Barons of Offaly, they had adorned this fair valley with those sacred piles whose beauty and magnificence may still be traced in their crumbling walls and broken arches. Here the Geraldine lords of old gathered around them the Franciscans, the Augustinians, and the Redemptionists, and made the place the abode of prayer and religious contemplation as well as of knightly valor. What long processions of cowed monks, what glittering shows at tilt and tournament, at hawking and hunting! What festive scenes in hall and bower, what minstrel roundelays!”

“And what glorious strains of sacred melody must have echoed through the vale,” said Margaret, “as the monks in the different convents chanted their several offices by night and by day. And how sweet must have sounded the Angelus bell from all the belfries, when at morn and noon and dewy eve it floated down the valley and echoed along the river’s banks! Truly it is a place of many memories.”

"And of wondrous beauty as well," I remarked, "a region of poetry and romance, and holiest peace and religious contemplation."

"Is it not sad to think," said Miss Fitzgerald, "that all these foundations of ancient piety and charity should have perished in the lapse of time, many of them by the spoiler's hand? When the lords and ladies of former times built and endowed these abbeys it was on the express condition that prayer and sacrifice were perpetually to be offered up within those hallowed walls for the repose of their souls and those of their kindred. How have the dead been robbed as well as the living!"

"One of the blessed effects of the facetiously-styled Reformation," said her brother; "in many places we know that even the tombs of the departed were not spared by the Protestant Iconoclasts of the sixteenth century, in their rage against Catholic works of art. But I should tell you, Mr. Howard, before we leave its vicinity something about yon ancient castle of Adare."

"I should very much like to know something of its history," I replied, "but I fear it will detain the ladies too long in this chilly air. Even you, Mr. Fitzgerald, invalid as you are, may be the worse for sitting here so long."

The ladies declared themselves quite willing to remain a little longer, and Uncle Maurice said the air did him good. "Moreover," said he, "I do not mean to tell you a long story about the castle, the most

interesting portion of its history being connected with the last days of the Desmond power, a period of which I will tell you many things on some future occasion. In the days when Gerald the sixteenth and last Earl of Desmond was struggling to maintain his own rights and defend his country and religion against the bloody tyranny of Elizabeth Tudor, this castle of Adare was one of the last of all his strongholds that fell before the might of the English arms. When beaten elsewhere the Geraldines still fell back on Adare, and with the Spanish soldiers sent over to assist the Earl, they bravely withstood more than one siege from the conquering English. But at length numbers prevailed, and the English got possession of the castle. A dreary day it was, surely, for all the country round when the hated flag of England replaced the well-loved banner of Desmond on the towers of the castle, and the proud, strong heart of Earl Gerald sank within him never more to rise when he heard that Adare, too, had fallen into the hands of the English. Well he knew what was sure to follow the spoliation and suppression of the three fair and rich abbeys which had for ages rested secure beneath the shadow of that lordly castle, shielded by the potent spell of Desmond's name. That was one of the last crushing blows that fell upon his heart, and when, soon after, the tragic end came, and the Desmond power fell forever, when the abbeys and shrines of Adare were desolated and destroyed, there seemed little hope that the place should ever

again call the Geraldine lord. But when Earl Gerald was dead and gone, his gallant brothers one by one took up the gauntlet for faith and country, a kinsman of theirs, Lord Kerry, surprised the English garrison of Adare Castle, and putting them to the sword, as they had before done the Irish and Spanish soldiers of Desmond, raised the ancient flag once more and kept it flying on the castle towers for longer time than could have been expected, considering the fearful odds against the bold chieftain. But at length it was recaptured by Captain Zouch, one of Elizabeth's officers, and held as an English garrison all through those sanguinary struggles between the English Crown and the Irish people, between the old faith and the new religion that make the reign of Elizabeth forever accursed in Ireland. At length, in 1641, the castle of Adare was finally dismantled and left as you now behold it, a mournful memento of departed strength and power, sad symbol of the fate of the Desmond line."

Our driver having by this time refreshed the inner man,—whilst his horse leisurely discoursed some hay he had thrown him, brought from home for the purpose, we resumed our seats on the car and drove through the village to see some ecclesiastical ruins which we had not yet visited. We found them much more dilapidated than any of the monastic edifices ever had been, in some instances very few traces remaining to show where noble fanes had once reared their crosses to the sky. Ruin, ruin all, and the sadness of desolation.

Turning with heavy hearts from these mournful relics of the past, we bade adieu to Adare, equally impressed, on my part, by the old-time monuments in which the place abounds, and the imposing grandeur of the new castle built by the present Earl of Dunraven,* which, with its spacious and beautiful grounds, forms a truly noble picture. Thus in that quiet and lovely valley, past and present seem to meet and mingle, and every object on which the eye rests is suggestive of solemn thought as well as poetic inspiration.

The short day was at an end when we reached Kilorgan, and after all the beauty and grandeur we had seen since we left it, I returned with pleasure to the shelter of its comparatively humble roof, around which so many sweet and pleasing associations already gathered. Dinner was served soon after our return, and our long ride in the open air made a substantial meal very acceptable. The repast was even unusually pleasant, and at its close, Uncle Maurice celebrated our return, as he said, to the household gods, by a glass of whiskey punch, a luxury in which he seldom indulged, and in which I was obliged to join him.

"After all," said he, "there is no place like home, and I pity those who have no home."

"Yet how soon you may be yourself one of the

* With the single exception of Carton House, the seat of the Duke of Leinster, in the County Kildare, Adare Castle is the noblest modern mansion in Ireland.

homeless, Maurice!" said his sister tenderly and sadly.

"He shall never be homeless, Aunt Ella, nor you neither!" said Margaret, her face all a-glow with strong emotion. "While I have hands to work we shall have a home, and you know there is scarce any kind of work that I cannot do when necessity requires it."

I felt a choking sensation in my throat, and the tears sprang to my eyes; unwilling to have my emotion seen I arose, and walking to the window,—it was, as already observed, a high one from the ground,—looked out a moment on the deep blue sky and the stars that glowed and trembled in the field of ether. Recovering my composure I returned to the table, saying as I resumed my seat—

"By the way, Mr. Fitzgerald, our English tongue has the advantage of all others in the possession of that word *home*, which, like many others of our most expressive words, we owe to the Saxon mother-tongue. No European language can boast an equivalent for *home*."

Margaret looked at me with keen scrutiny, then smiled, but said nothing; all at once she rose from the table, and placing her aunt's arm within her own, retired to the parlor, whither, after a brief conversation on the subject I had started, Mr. Fitzgerald and I followed.

We found Margaret seated on a *tabouret* at her aunt's feet with one arm resting on her knee, in an attitude so graceful that I paused a moment at the

door to admire the picture. The two were so engrossed in their own conversation that neither noticed our approach till we stood beside them. "Ah!" said Margaret, starting and blushing, "you have come sooner than we expected."

"But, I hope, not sooner than we are welcome, Margaret," said her uncle.

"Oh! of course not. Well! now I must leave you for a while, and, Uncle Maurice, be sure you think of some good story for this evening."

"I have thought of one already, my dear!"

"Very well! I shall not be long gone." So saying, she disappeared.

An hour later the prayers were over, and our little circle drawn together as usual, one of us, at least, in anxious expectation.

"I know not, Mr. Howard!" said Mr. Fitzgerald, "whether you have ever heard of Gerald, the poet earl of Desmond?"

I replied in the negative.

"He was a very remarkable man, then, and his whole career was something out of the common order. He was the fourth Earl of Desmond, and succeeded to the title whilst still very young. He was by nature sensitive and reserved, with all those finer and nobler feelings which belong to a poetic temperament. He was a man not only of varied accomplishments, but of scientific tastes and studious habits. Above all, he excelled in mathematics—a rare taste for a nobleman in that age. Other pursuits of a far

different kind are and have been attributed to Earl Gerald, and by the people of the Desmond country, indeed, all through Munster, his name is still mentioned with a shudder as a man who had dealings with the Evil One, and was, by him, endowed with more than mortal power. It is not improbable that Gerald did apply himself to the study of those occult sciences which were, we know, much in vogue amongst the learned of those days. Alchemy and astrology were favorite studies in those medieval times, and others, it might be, of a darker and more mystic nature, which brought men in more immediate contact with the secrets of nature, and gave them power over the very elements. To these dark, mysterious pursuits, call them by what name you may, there is very little doubt that Gerald was addicted, so that whilst men and women of his own rank spoke of him as a poet and a man of extraordinary learning, by the common people he was set down as a magician and regarded with superstitious fear.

"But it was not alone as a poet or as a magician that Earl Gerald was known amongst his contemporaries. He was, moreover, a gallant knight and a skilful leader, a man of rare prudence, and every way fitted to maintain the martial fame of his warlike ancestors. Very soon after his accession to the title he was appointed Lord Justice of Ireland, which office he held for some years, and discharged its onerous duties with ability and integrity, but with no great

success in suppressing the tumultuous dissensions of the old and new Irish.

"Strange to say that with all the fearful stories told of him amongst the peasantry, Earl Garrett, as they called him, was loved as well as feared. Unlike other men of the same tastes and habits, he was a lover of mirth and jollity, and much delighted in all manner of festive sports. A true Geraldine he was, bountiful, affable to all beneath him, proud and high to those of his own quality, a valorous knight in the lists, a graceful poet and skilful musician in lady's bower, and a right jovial reveller when the wassail bowl went round in banquet hall.

"With the native Irish Earl Garrett was the most popular lord of his day; they loved him on account of his great love for their ancient lore, his intimate acquaintance with their national annals, and, though last not least important, his munificent patronage of their bards and *seannachies*. No *brehon* more learned than he in Irish law, no annalist more conversant with the chronicles of Eire. Then his charities were munificent, and his ear ever open to tales of distress."

"A perfect character he must have been as you represent him, Mr. Fitzgerald," I replied.

"And as the native annalists represent him, so do I," replied the old gentleman warmly; "in all the history of Ireland subsequent to the Norman invasion, no one Anglo-Irish chieftain stands out in more favorable colors than Gerald, the poet earl of Desmond. Of all the Geraldines he was, perhaps, the greatest

lover of the old Irish, and in proof thereof he asked and obtained permission from the King of England to send one of his sons to be fostered by one of the O'Briens of Thomond, and throughout his life adopted the manners and customs of the Irish. Notwithstanding all this he had some sharp contests with certain of his neighbors, in some of which he was defeated. The powerful Anglo-Irish sept of De Bermingham gave him much trouble; even as Lord Justice he had been unable to bring them into subjection. Indeed, as a general thing, Gerald, with all his accomplishments, and with all his personal valor, was not successful in war, although it was his fortune to be often obliged to unsheath the sword.

"Earl Garrett's favorite residence was of a character to increase the belief in his supernatural connections. It was situate on the shores of Lough Gur, in the midst of a wild, bleak solitude, a tract of country dotted all over with druidic remains,—stone circles, cromleachs, pillar stones and monumental cairns. In the midst of this wild region, surrounded by high, and, for the most part, rocky hills, lies the lonely lake in all its solitary beauty, its islands, like all the surrounding district, encumbered with the mystic monuments of rites and races past away; two castles of the Desmonds defended the approaches to the lake, and in one of these, called from its gloomy exterior the Black Castle, the poet earl loved to dwell. Over and above the features I have already mentioned in this grand yet desolate scene, the castle commanded a view

of a church, founded by a Norman lady ages before then used for divine worship, but now, like the proud castles on either side, a heap of ruins, and of a singular serpentine passage winding between rows of huge masses of stone from the lake's edge to a desolate place some distance inland called the Red Bog.*

"What a dismal dwelling that must have been!" said Margaret; "really, I do not wonder, Uncle Maurice, that the people set that strange Gerald down for a wizard, or a conjuror. The very name of his castle, situate in such a place, was enough to inspire the peasantry with superstitious awe."

"Earl Garrett married while still young a beautiful lady of rank and fortune, to whom he was all his life tenderly attached. They had several children, but most of their offspring died young, some of them being taken off suddenly in the very summer of existence. The eldest son, Maurice, died before coming to the title, and the second son, John, had been Earl of Desmond but a few months, when he was drowned in crossing the river Suir. This young man had been married, however, and left one son, the Earl Thomas of whom I have already told you, as being deposed by his Uncle James on account of his marriage with Catherine McCormac. This James, the brother of

* Not far from the ruins of the Black Castle on the shore of Lough Gur may be seen a singular geological formation called the Mass Rock, so called because tradition relates that, during the days of penal persecution, the divine mysteries were frequently celebrated in one of its many recesses.

Earl John above mentioned, was the third son of the poet earl, and the same who had been fostered by the O'Briens of Thomond. Consequently, two of Earl Garrett's sons succeeded him as Earls of Desmond, and James, after deposing his nephew, Earl Thomas, ruled Desmond for thirty years."

"But do you really think, uncle," said Margaret "that Earl Gerald was what tradition describes him?—do you think he practised magic?"

"It is hard to say, my dear, at this distance of time. One thing is certain that the poet earl must have been altogether different from the men of his time. Legends tell that he was in league with the powers of evil, and could change himself into any shape he desired. *Dhirro Dhirla*, the name by which he is known in local traditions, is still a word of dread and power amongst the Munster peasantry, and plays a chief part in their winter evening tales. While the storm-fiend rides the blast abroad, or the winter snow falls fast, they will gather more closely round the hearth, and hush their breath in awe while the oft-told tale is told of how *Dhirro Dhirla*, riding home one night to the Black Castle all alone, heard himself called but saw no one although the voice sounded close behind; how the third time he answered, and then saw the Evil One in the shape of a tall, black knight, who commanded him under pain of instant death to follow him, when he took him to a wild and lonely place where a compact was made between them that for a certain number of years *Dhirro Dhirla* should have

such power as Satan could give him, but that when that term was expired he should pay with his immortal soul for the superhuman powers he had enjoyed. Others will tell how the earl, to gratify his wife's curiosity and give her a proof of his weird power, once changed himself before her into some strange form, that she, in her fright, forgot the prescribed condition, and screamed aloud, whereupon Satan claimed his own, and the magician, with a piercing shriek, vanished; and was seen no more. Others again will tell that the warrior-poet earl, who loved the Gael so well, is enchanted in a cave in the Desmond country, with a score or so of his mail clad knights, awaiting, sword in hand, the hour when his enchantment shall cease, when some bold hand shall thrice blow the bugle which lies on a table near. Many a story, too, is told of belated wights who came by chance into this enchanted cave amongst the wild rocks where Earl Garrett and his knights await the hour of their disenchantment."

"It is a strange story," I said, breaking the silence which followed the close of Mr. Fitzgerald's recital; "what does history say of Gerald's death?"

"Unfortunately, history throws no certain light on the close of a life so singular. While some of our most authentic records, such as the 'Annals of the Four Masters,' the 'Annals of Clonmacnoise,' and others of a similar character, mention the fact that 'Gerald of Desmond, called the poet earl, died after the victory of penance,' others of equal, or nearly

equal, respectability, relate that whilst encamped with his army in a wild district of Munster, he walked out alone by night and was never more seen. Historians of the latter class account for his mysterious disappearance by supposing that he was secretly murdered by some vindictive enemy. Whatever the cause of his disappearance may have been, it is certainly so much in accordance with the popular tradition concerning his enchantment that I am inclined to think it the correct version, after all."

"I should like to visit that Lough Gur," I said, "and Earl Garrett's Black Castle."

"And there is Kilmallock, or the Irish Balbec," said Uncle Maurice, another desolated seat of the Desmond power, which you must also see. When you next visit Kilorgan we will take you to both places."

"Uncle Maurice, Uncle Maurice, you forget!" said Margaret in a sorrowful tone, as she and her aunt rose to retire. "What right have we to invite Mr. Howard to Kilorgan? When next he visits it he will be his cousin's guest, and we—who knows where we shall be?"

For once overpowered by her emotions, Margaret only bowed, while her aunt said "good night," and both silently withdrew. Mr. Fitzgerald and myself soon followed their example.

CHAPTER X.

It was my intention to have left Kilorgan on the following day, and I laid my head on my pillow that night with a feeling of sadness which surprised myself. It seemed as though I were about to leave a quiet harbor where all was peace and calm enjoyment, to be tossed again on the world's wild ocean. True, I had near and dear ones awaiting me beyond the Channel, and much, I knew, they wondered at my long stay in Ireland; but still I could not think with pleasure of returning home. I reproached myself for it, but, do as I would, I could not feel any less unwillingness to leave Kilorgan, any more eagerness to see my home again. My mind was sorely troubled, and it was long before sleep came to lull my senses in happy forgetfulness.

When I awoke next morning the night was just giving place to day, and only the faintest light penetrated to my room. On going to the window and opening the curtains, which hung before it, I saw, with a thrill of pleasure, I must confess, that the snow was falling thick and fast. Long I stood and watched it as it fell in great white flakes, wrapping the earth, like a huge corpse, in one vast shroud; silently and softly it fell like peace on the troubled spirit, and I blessed the Almighty hand that sends both one and the other

Making a hasty toilet, I descended to the parlor, where I found Margaret sitting alone by one of the windows. With her foot on a tabouret, and her elbow on her knee, she sat, her head resting on her hand, looking out, it would seem, on the wintry scene; but, when I went near enough to get a glimpse of her face, I saw that her look was abstracted, and her eyes fixed on vacancy. So lost in thought was she that she did not heed my approach till I spoke and wished her good morning; then she started from her thoughtful attitude, and said laughing: "This sort of weather makes one idle, I believe. Here have I been sitting this last half hour enjoying the *dolce far niente*, and watching the white, feathery snow, thinking, too, of the time when I used to think, because my old nurse said so, that when it snowed the good people in Scotland were plucking their geese. Dear me! how very, very long ago that is! What a pity that we cannot be children always!"

"And are we not children always, children of a larger growth?"

"Yes, I know some people say so, but, for my part, I cannot believe it," and she shook her head sadly; "when the red-hot iron of experience seathes our hearts, and the blight of care and sorrow falls on our life's bloom, making us old even in youth, who will say that we are children?"

Touched by the earnestness of her tone, I could not help saying:

"You have, indeed, been early and sorely tried,

my dear Miss Fitzgerald! but it seems to me that neither care nor sorrow has had power to dim the brightness of *your* youth. Your heart is as buoyant as ever."

Again she shook her head, and I saw a tear tremble on her eye-lash; she shook it off with a motion of the lid, and answered with a forced smile:

"I try hard to keep it so. What would become of my dear uncle and aunt were I to grow faint-hearted and despondent?—But here I am talking of *self*, forgetting how uninteresting a theme it ever is to listeners. When do you think of leaving us, Mr. Howard?"

"I intended to have gone to-day," I replied, "but I fear this heavy snow will prevent me."

"Why, of course, it will; it must have snowed all night, and the roads must be impassable by this time. Great as your hurry is to get away, you must content yourself to remain some days longer until the roads are cleared."

"Then you think I am anxious to get away?"

"Of course you are, and I do not wonder; our poor old place must be fearfully dull to you who are accustomed to the gaiety and bustle of city life."

"Fearfully dull!" I repeated; "how can you think so, Miss Fitzgerald, when I have been putting off my departure from day to day until I am actually ashamed of having trespassed so long on your hospitality?"

"Well! we only hope you will trespass a little longer on our hospitality, Mr. Howard!" And she held out her hand with the frank courtesy of a young

hostess. I took the hand and held it a moment, while I gazed in silence on her animated features.

"You are very kind," I said at length, dropping the little hand with a suddenness that seemed to surprise the young lady; "how can I ever forget you all?"

Margaret Fitzgerald laughed. "Why, Mr. Howard! you surely do not *mean* to forget us? Or do you really wish to bury us under the waters of Lethe?"

"Heaven forbid I should," I replied more warmly than I could have wished, "for then I should resign to dull forgetfulness some of the sweetest hours of my existence."

"Oh! that is the *amende honorable*," and she smiled; "I really feared that truth had overcome politeness, and that you wished to dismiss us forever from your mind. But pray excuse me, Mr. Howard! I hear Uncle Maurice coming down stairs, and I must see if breakfast is ready, then go up for Aunt Ella."

Great satisfaction was expressed by Mr. Fitzgerald and his sister on finding that I could not leave Kilor-gan that day, or probably the next day, either. And a pleasant day it was to me. Margaret had her quilting frame brought to the great parlor, and while the snow darkened the still air without, and the woodfires brightened the ancient hall within, we four sat together, Uncle Maurice and I alternately watching the snow-flakes as they fell, and the ladies at their work,—Aunt Ella, as usual, at her knitting, her niece at her quilting. The hours flew by, all too soon it seemed to me, in cheerful and varied con-

versation. At last, Margaret proposed that her uncle should tell me one of his evening stories then, "as Mr. Howard can hear but so few more," she added.

"Why not tell a story yourself, Margaret?" said her uncle; "you know 'changes are lightsome,' and Mr. Howard must be pretty well tired of my cracked old voice."

"You do your voice great injustice, my dear sir," I hastened to put in; "it has given me more pleasure than Malibran's or Grisi's, for their voices were forgotten as soon as heard, but the associations connected with the tones of your voice can never be forgotten by me."

"After such a compliment as that, Uncle Maurice," said Margaret, evidently pleased and gratified, "you cannot refuse to tell Mr. Howard another story of the Geraldines."

"Very well, my dear," he replied with a pleasant smile; "if you all wish to hear the old man talk, he is only too willing. Now what shall I tell?"

"Suppose, brother," said Miss Fitzgerald, senior, "suppose you told Mr. Howard about the Earl of Desmond who died at Drogheda?"

"Nothing better, Ellice," replied her brother, and he closed his eyes as was his wont, in order to arrange his thoughts.

"First," said Margaret, "I want somebody to hold my line while I chalk out my pattern."

"Can I do it, Miss Fitzgerald?" I asked.

"Oh! any one can do it," she replied carelessly;

"you have only to stand there opposite me, and hold the end of the cord, and then lay it on the cloth where I will show you."

Amused and interested I took my station opposite my fair hostess, holding one end of a cord while she held the other. She then proceeded to rub it over and over with a piece of chalk; then bending over the work her sweet, earnest face, she said, "Now, Mr. Howard, put your end there, while I put mine here," and when I had done so she took the twine between two of her delicate fingers right in the middle and gave it a sharp pinch, which striking it against the cloth, left a clearly defined line of chalk on its smooth surface.

"Is that all?" I said, fearful that it was.

"Oh dear, no! we have only commenced. Please take the cord again. The one chalking does several lines. Now lay it down and hold fast as before. Really, you do very well, Mr. Howard, considering that it is your first attempt."

Her uncle looked on much amused, but Aunt Ella remonstrated in her sweet and gentle way. "My dear child, how can you ask Mr. Howard to do such things?—What can he think of you?"

"Let him think what he pleases, aunt," said Margaret with perfect *nonchalance*, "I have got no one else to hold my line,—unless Uncle Maurice, and I am sure Mr. Howard would not allow *him* to do it."

I thanked her with a look, and we both laughed as we resumed our work. When she had marked what

she thought enough for her present purpose, she told me with an arch smile that I was now at liberty, "and, Uncle Maurice, you can commence your narrative."

"The Geraldines," said Mr. Fitzgerald, "had gone on, in both their main branches, growing and flourishing, till in the time of Edward IV. they had reached all but sovereign power. In the great struggle between the houses of York and Lancaster they had steadily adhered to the Yorkists, and now when Edward IV. had, by his marriage with Elizabeth Woodville, brought the Wars of the Roses happily to an end, he made it a duty to reward those nobles throughout the realm who had by their gallantry and devotion contributed to the success of his cause. Amongst these were found none more worthy of his gratitude than the Earls of Kildare and Desmond, the latter of whom had fought nine battles against the Lancastrians. Desmond was, therefore, appointed Lord Deputy, and both earls were honored with every mark of the royal favor.

"It so happened that Desmond visited London soon after the king's marriage, and in the intimacy of long-trying friendship, Edward asked him what he thought of that event. The earl begged to be excused from answering, but the king insisted on hearing his opinion, telling him to speak, and speak freely. 'If your majesty commands me, then,' said Desmond, 'I must e'en obey, however unwillingly. I do not approve of your majesty's marriage with the Lady Elizabeth,—

to secure your power you should have married some foreign princess, and if I were in your highness's place, I would obtain a divorce from this lady whom you have, I think, unwisely espoused. Then you might choose a wife from some of the royal houses of Europe.'—'I thank you, Desmond,' said the king; 'I own it is wise and prudent, but I cannot accept it. I wed Elizabeth for love, and I love her still.'—'I must pray your highness, then, to forget that such advice was ever given by me,' said the earl, and the king promised never to reveal it to mortal ear. But alas! his promise was written in sand. Some time after, when the new queen began to throw off the mask, and showed her harsh and haughty temper in a way that was highly offensive to the king, the latter, being angry, exclaimed—'It is but fitting, madam! that you should treat me so. But had I taken my cousin Desmond's advice, your pride would have been humbled.'

"Hearing this Elizabeth changed color, and became instantly calm, affecting, however, to take no notice of what had been said. The king was thrown off his guard. A little while after, when he and his beautiful queen were reconciled, Elizabeth, taking advantage of a moment of fond endearment, besought the king to tell her what the Earl of Desmond had said in her regard. It was long before she could prevail upon Edward to tell her, but by her earnest protestation that she would owe the noble earl no ill will no matter what he had said, she at length succeeded,

and by tears and caresses drew the secret from the king, who vowed he could refuse nothing to so fair a lady."

"What a shame!" cried Margaret, boiling with indignation.

"The old story, my dear," replied her uncle, smiling; "King Edward only did what husbands have been doing occasionally ever since the days of Adam and Eve, sacrificing their better judgment to the blandishments of capricious wives."

"And what was the result as regarded the earl?" I asked.

"It was that before he knew what was going on the Earl of Worcester, the queen's favorite, arrived in Dublin with a royal writ superseding him as Lord Justice. How this had been effected Desmond was utterly at a loss to understand; the shock it gave him was, however, felt throughout the whole country, for during his time of office he had made himself respected by all parties. Worcester, on the contrary, was both feared and disliked; his reputation as a bold, bad man had preceded him, and all men knew that it was by treachery and foul play he had got himself appointed in Desmond's place. It was mortifying, too, and vexatious to all parties in Ireland to have an Irish nobleman so generally beloved as Earl Desmond was superseded in his office by an English nobleman of such ill repute as Worcester.

"Before Desmond had time to appeal to the king, or ascertain what means had been used to effect so

sudden a change, he and all Ireland was startled by the new Deputy's calling a Parliament at Drogheda. This step was so singular that people could not at first account for it. Alas! it was soon made easy of comprehension. Before this parliament of Worcester's, far away from his own part of the country, the Earl of Desmond was arraigned for treasonable practices, chiefly for 'consorting with the Irish enemy,' and the trial being hurried through with shameless haste, the illustrious nobleman was convicted in his absence of the heinous crime aforesaid. Hearing of this, he went in all haste to Drogheda, never supposing for a moment that his life could be in any danger, but determined to appeal against Worcester's arbitrary proceeding. Unfortunately this was thrusting his head into the lion's mouth. The earl was at once seized and thrown into prison, an order from the king for his execution was produced, and the sight of it broke Desmond's noble heart. He resigned himself to his fate, and was summarily executed, dying a Christian as he had lived,—before the country he had served so loyally and well, or the faithful people of his own vast domains could be made aware of his danger. He died, too, with the barbed arrow of his sovereign's ingratitude rankling in his heart, little dreaming that Edward knew no more of his imminent peril than the child unborn,—that the royal signet had been surreptitiously obtained by the vengeful queen and affixed to an order for his execution written by one of Elizabeth's minions. Indeed, when the king heard

of the noble Desmond's tragical end, he was overcome with grief and severely censured those who had been instrumental in compassing his death. But princes are proverbially ungrateful, and Edward's sorrow was of small account compared with the storm of grief and indignation which burst from every true Irish heart, on learning the strange and awful scene which had been enacted in the old town by the Boyne, amongst the hostile English of Louth and Meath."

"What fearful times those were," sighed Miss Fitzgerald, "when such things could be done!"

"Yes, Ella, when such a man as Earl Thomas, Count Palatine of Desmond, a man so loved, so honored, so great, so powerful, could be got rid of by malicious enemies beyond seas in so summary a manner, and that in the name of law and order.* Seventeen years

* The Four Masters record in these terms the death of this ill-fated nobleman: "Thomas, Earl of Desmond, the son of James, son of Garrett, who had been Lord Justice of Ireland, the most illustrious of his tribe in Ireland in his time for his comeliness and stature, for his hospitality and chivalry, his charity and humanity to the poor, and the indigent of the Lord, his bounteousness in bestowing jewels and riches on the laity, the clergy, and the poets, and his suppression of theft and immorality, went to Drogheda to meet the English Lord Justice, and the other English of Meath. These acted treacherously by him, and without any crime on his part they beheaded him; the greater number of the men of Ireland were grieved at the news of it."—*Annals*, Vol. IV., A. D. 1468.

Whilst all the old Irish annalists speak of this earl in terms fully as eulogistic, proving by their unanimous and enthusiastic praise of him that he was, indeed, a man of rare and noble qualities, it is curious to see in what wise a writer of the present century, a Pro-

after his sad end, the English monarch of that day wrote that the Earl of Desmond had been extortionally slain and murdered by color of the laws, within Ireland, by certain persons, then having the government and rule there, against all manhood, reason and good conscience; and in the family records of the Geraldines, he is set down as a 'martyr of Christ.'*

"Thus perished at the age of forty-two the nobleman who of all others of Norman-English extraction stood highest in the esteem of the Irish people, whose most authentic annals all describe him as a man whose merits were above all praise."

"And did the Geraldines," I asked, "powerful as they were, make no effort to revenge this foul murder?"

"That did they, and well, too!—the earl's sons were still too young to take the lead in any move-

testant, represents the same individual: "His character appears to have a considerable resemblance to that of his father—encroaching, ambitious, and fond of the savage and semi-barbarous independence to which he had been trained. His success in the field, and the elevation which followed, were too much for his weak and proud mind. He now became the object of loud accusation, and his enemies began to shake his power on every side. His rash wars and disgraceful treaties, *his Irish friendships and connections*, and the intolerable insolence of his pretensions, were registered against him in malice. (*Wills' Illustrious and Distinguished Irishmen*, Vol. I.) Yet with all the insolent pretensions, and intolerable oppressions of which he accuses the unfortunate earl, he admits, in another place, his great popularity!" But "*his Irish friendships and connections*"—that was the rub!

* See Gilbert's "Viceroys of Dublin," p. 387.

ment, but his cousin, Gerald, unfurled the banner of Desmond, and rallying around it all the friends and retainers of their house, marched suddenly into Leinster, and, despite all the efforts of Worcester to prevent it, ravaged the English possessions in Meath and Kildare with fire and sword. The parliament of the colony, the same which had attainted Desmond, passed an act against the brave Gerald, attainting him also of high treason, but it seems they were unable to carry it out, for Gerald took good care to keep out of their reach, and had power to set their malice at defiance. It is gratifying to know that the cruel and ambitious Worcester survived his illustrious victim but two years, and was made to undergo in England the same fate to which he had condemned Desmond. He was beheaded on Tower Hill in 1470, by order of De Vere, Earl of Oxford, whose father Worcester had caused to be executed in the same place four years before."

"But was not the Earl of Kildare attainted at the same time as Desmond, Uncle Maurice?" said Margaret.

"Yes, my dear, but he having been more wary than Desmond, took good care not to put himself in Worcester's power, and after Desmond's execution, when the storm of public indignation was raging on every side, and the Munster Geraldines sweeping all before them in revenge for their chieftain's death, the Deputy was but too glad to withdraw the attainder against Kildare, and to make him all the concessions

he required in order to secure the powerful aid which the politic earl was both able and willing to give."

"After all," said I, "the subjection of Ireland to England was in those days merely nominal. It was by keeping up the dissensions between the old and new Irish, and between the great lords and chiefs of either party, using one against the other as it suited their purpose, that the English monarchs kept their hold on the country."

"Precisely, Mr. Howard! there never was a time when it could be fairly said that Ireland was conquered by England, or the native clans and septs brought all into subjection. On the contrary, we find, in reading the Irish annals, that in every age from the days of Strongbow and Dermot Mac Murrough to those of Elizabeth Tudor, the Irish chiefs and toparchs were continually warring against the usurpers of their ancient possessions, often recovering whole districts from them. The fact is, that a vast amount of heroism was displayed by the Gaelic lords of Ireland in their unceasing struggle against the English, and had they but been united, they could, at many periods of their history, have swept the foreigners into the sea. But wanting unity, they wanted all, and their individual bravery was of no account in freeing Ireland. When we consider how inferior the natives were to the first invaders in arms and armor, we cannot help being astonished at the good fight they made."

"You are not of Voltaire's opinion, then. Mr

Fitzgerald, that the Irish fight better everywhere abroad than they do at home?" I asked with a smile.

"Most assuredly not," he replied, his pale, hollow cheek flushing scarlet red; "I indignantly deny it, as I would were the authority ten times more respectable than the so-called sage of Verney. I know the Irish have fought many a good fight in other countries, for those who happily enlisted their sympathies, but I know, too, that they fought as valiantly at home, in defence of their hearths and homes, as they ever did abroad. Voltaire, when he made that libellous remark, so often quoted, was thinking of Fontenoy, and Cremona, and Ypres, and Ramillies, but he evidently knew nothing of Benburb, or the Yellow Ford, or the Pass of Plumes; he had probably never heard of such Irishmen as Cathal O'Connor, Art Mac Murrough, Feach Mac Hugh, Hugh O'Neil, Red Hugh O'Donnell, or Owen Roe O'Neill, all men of might in their day and generation,—to say nothing of scores of others, amongst them many a patriotic knight and noble of my own race. Much Voltaire knew, indeed, of how Irishmen fought at home!" And rising from his seat the high-spirited descendant of the Geraldines strode to and fro the spacious apartment with the air of a palladin of old.

"I see the old blood is in you still, Uncle Maurice," said Margaret with a merry laugh; "he reminds me now, Mr. Howard, of a noble ancestor of ours who, when wounded and taken prisoner by the Butlers at the great battle of Affane, in the County Water-

ford, being carried from the field by some of the Butler's men, was tauntingly asked by the Earl of Ormond 'where is now the great Earl of Desmond?' replied—'where but in his rightful place, on the necks of the Butlers?' Ah! Uncle Maurice! Uncle Maurice! you ought to have lived in those long-past days!" And she shook her head with an air of solemnity that was but half affected.

Her uncle smiled sadly as he resumed his seat. "I believe you are right, child," he said with a sigh; "the old leaven is within me still. Even old age and poverty have not quite chilled the hot blood of the Geraldines. *Apropos* to that, Mr. Howard," he continued, "you have probably heard the story of the Geraldine lord who, being in a towering passion with one of his attendants, a gentleman of his suite stepped up to him and said—'My good lord, one of your horsemen hath promised me a choice horse, if I snip one hair from your beard.'—'Well!' said the earl, 'I agree thereto; but if thou pluck any more than one, I promise thee to bring my fist from thine ear.'"

"I have heard the story before," said I, "and with much interest, as going to show that with all their pride and ire, when roused to anger, the Geraldines were affable and generous to their friends."

"By the way, Maurice," said Miss Fitzgerald, "you might tell Mr. Howard this evening something about that same Earl of Kildare, who was undoubtedly one of the greatest and most remarkable men of his race and lineage."

"With great pleasure, Ellice!—but now, I think, Mr. Howard, we might have a game of chess. You beat me last time, and I must try if I can't beat you before you leave Kilorgan."

I willingly accepted his proposal, and our game occupied the remaining hours of daylight.

When we assembled in the evening at the cheery "ingle-side," Uncle Maurice resumed his narrative:

"Perhaps no truer type of the Geraldines ever existed than Gerald, the eighth Earl of Kildare, commonly called *Garrett More*, or Gerald the Great, in the traditions of the country. He was bold, dashing, reckless, prone to anger, yet easily appeased, with a heart as soft as a woman's where he thought kindness was due, yet fierce and wrathful as the tempest when roused to ire. In pursuit of his daring ambition, he feared neither man nor devil, and I wish I could even say that he feared God, whose most sacred laws he too often set at nought. Not that he was a bad man—at times he was both good and generous, and did as much for the Church as most of his predecessors, but it was that his fierce passions oftentimes carried him beyond the bounds of virtue and religion. Still he was a great man as the world went in those days, and occupies more space in the family annals of the Geraldines than any other ever did. His first wife was the Lady Alison Eustace, daughter of the famous Chancellor and Treasurer, Sir Roland Fitz Eustace, afterwards Lord Portlester, best known in the present day, Mr. Howard, by reason of the chapel which

bears his name in the ruined church of St. Audeon's parish, in Dublin, where his tomb may yet be seen ; the only memento now remaining of a man who in himself, and in his connections, held potent sway in Ireland for the better part of a generation ! The sister of this great Earl of Kildare, Lady Eleanor Fitz Gerald, had married Henry, the O'Neil of that day. Gerald had six daughters, of whom more hereafter, but for one of them, Lady Eustacia, wife of Ulick Burke, Lord Clanrickard, he was forced to wage war. This is how it happened : ' Clanrickard treated his wife so badly that she was obliged to complain to her father, who at first remonstrated with him on the subject, but, finding his remonstrances of no avail, he summoned his kinsmen and allies to his aid, and, on some political pretext, marched into Connaught. Clanrickard, on his side, had not failed to rally his supporters, and the battle which followed, known as the battle of Knochdoe, was one of the fiercest and bloodiest ever fought on Irish ground. With the Earl of Kildare were the Earl of Desmond and all the principal Lords of the Pale ; also the O'Donnell of Tyrconnell and Art O'Neil of Tyr-owen, the earl's grandson, together with a number of other Irish chieftains. Clanrickard, on the other hand, was supported by O'Brien of Thomond, Mac Namara, O'Carroll, and O'Connor of Connaught. The battle was long and bloody ; the Connaughtmen had the advantage of numbers, yet they were at last defeated and routed with such slaughter that it was

ong before the Southern and Western clans recovered the effects of that disastrous day. Kildare's army, too, suffered severely, but a victory so splendid consoled him and his friends for their losses.

"Gerald also triumphed over the Butlers, especially Sir James, the nephew of the Earl of Ormond, whom that nobleman, living mostly in London, left in charge of his Irish castles and estates. This Sir James was a thorn in the side of the great earl, whose son-in-law, Sir Pierce Butler, being the presumptive heir to the earldom of Ormond, was the object of his cousin's hatred and persecution. For this and other causes, the ancient feud between the Butlers and the Geraldines broke out with renewed violence, and hostilities were actively carried on for some time between the rival factions. After much bloodshed on both sides, and much devastation of the Ormond country on one side and the counties of the Pale on the other, Sir James of Ormond pushed his boldness so far that, after plundering and burning the county and town of Kildare, he encamped with his forces in the woods of Thomas Court, in the immediate vicinity of Dublin. Then the Earl of Kildare and he agreed to hold a conference at St. Patrick's Cathedral. But as each went thither with a strong detachment of armed men, and a great concourse of the citizens were present—all animated more or less by a sense of their own wrongs, there was little chance of an amicable arrangement being entered into. A quarrel broke out between the citizens and Ormond's men, when Sir

James Butler, fearing that his life was in danger, fled to the chapter-house, and secured the doors as best he could. The citizens, becoming more and more furious, began to shoot their arrows into the church imagining that Ormond and his soldiers were within, and the tumult became fearful.

"At this juncture the Earl of Kildare approaching the door of the chapter-house called to Sir James of Ormond that he meant him no ill and would pledge his honor for his safety. Then it was that the singular scene took place of which I am about to tell you.

"Sir James Butler, unwilling to trust his ancient enemy, demanded that the earl should give him his hand in token of his sincerity, and by way of ratifying his promise. 'Marry, that will I,' said the frank, bold Geraldine. A cleft was immediately made in the door large enough to permit the noblemen to shake hands through; but even then, the cool caution of the Butlers prevailed; Sir James feared to put his through the aperture lest it might be cut off, whereupon the Earl of Kildare, in his quick, impulsive way, thrust his arm through to the elbow, and Sir James convinced at last, seized the proffered hand and warmly shook it; then the door was opened, and the two noblemen embracing each other, in sight of their respective followers and all the assembled citizens, vowed to keep the peace and be good friends for the time to come."

"Well! that ~~was~~ a singular method of shaking

hands," I remarked; "nothing could be more illustrative of the semi-barbarous state of society in those days."

"And this Garrett More of whom I am telling you, Mr. Howard, may be taken, I think, as a fair specimen of the nobles of those troublous times. It would take me too long to tell you the whole of his very remarkable career, so I must content myself with a few more anecdotes of one who stands prominently out even from amongst the proud and warlike Geraldines as a man every way remarkable."

"But what about the sacrilege committed by the citizens that day in shooting their arrows into the Cathedral, uncle," said Margaret. "You must not allow Mr. Howard to suppose that it went unpunished."

"You are very right, Margaret; I was forgetting to clear up that point. In consequence of that sacrilegious act, Mr. Howard, the citizens of Dublin were excommunicated; and a Legate was sent expressly from Rome, who only absolved them from the awful sentence pronounced against them on condition that for the future the Mayor of Dublin, by way of giving public satisfaction, should go barefoot through the city in open procession before the Blessed Sacrament on Corpus Christi Day; and this penance was for long years after duly accomplished. Those, you see, were the Ages of Faith!"

"Yes, truly, and in that respect they shame our boasted age of progress. I fear you would find no

mayor of a city in our day to do public penance for the sins of the citizens, or his own, either !”

“Well ! you see the Church, in her tender love for her children, does not demand public satisfaction even of public sinners in these latter times, ever since the unity of faith was broken and Christendom ceased to be all one family. But to return to Garrett More : Being accused, whether truly or falsely I cannot say, of favoring the claims of Perkin Warbeck, the earl was summoned to London, and was there thrown into prison—where he remained for full two years. His wife, the Countess Alison, hearing of his captivity, died of grief and was buried in the Grey Abbey at Kilcullen, founded by her father, Lord Portlester, of whom I have already told you. At length the earl was brought before Henry VII. and his council, accused of many grievous misdemeanors. One of these was that he had forced the Bishop of Meath from the sanctuary. To this charge Gerald replied that he was not sufficiently learned to make answer to such weighty matters. The bishop was a learned man and so was not he.—‘You may choose a counsellor then,’ said the king. ‘I doubt I shall not have the one I choose,’ replied the keen-witted earl. The king assured him he should have whoever he desired, advising him to choose a good one, for that he feared his case was bad. ‘I will choose the best in England,’ said the earl. ‘And who is that ?’ asked the king. ‘Marry, the king himself,’ said the earl, ‘and, by St. Bride, I will have no other.’

The king laughed, and turning to the council said—
A wiser man might have chosen worse.'

"The next charge against the earl was that he had burned the Cathedral of Cashel, and the fact was proved by many witnesses. Great was the amazement of all when the bold earl exclaimed: 'You may spare yourselves the trouble of proving this; I did burn the Cathedral, but, by my faith, I would never have done it but that I thought the Archbishop had been in it.' At this every one laughed, even the king himself, for the same Archbishop was present, and was one of the earl's most active accusers. Then cried the Bishop of Meath angrily—'All Ireland cannot govern this man.'—'Then,' said the king, laughing heartily, 'he shall govern all Ireland.' And accordingly the earl was sent back to Ireland as Lord Deputy, restored to all his honors and estates. While his trial was pending he married his second wife, the Lady Elizabeth St. John, first cousin to Henry VII. I should have mentioned that after the great victory of Knockdoe Garrett More made an offering to the Cathedral of Christ Church in Dublin of two vestments of cloth of gold. He also rebuilt the Church of Cashel which he had burnt.

"It was this great earl who wrote the famous letter to the Gherardini of Florence, which is found in the Gherardini papers. He was shot by one of the O'Mores of Leix while watering his horse in the river Greese at Kilkea. His body was carried to Dublin and buried before the high altar in Christ Church

Cathedral, to which he had added a chapel in honor of the Blessed Virgin, known as 'St. Mary's Chapel. A volume, indeed, might be written on the life and achievements of this one Earl of Kildare."

This long story, so extremely interesting to me, had occupied the whole evening, so that when it was concluded, the ladies bade us good night and retired immediately, as did Uncle Maurice and I soon after.



CHAPTER XL

By the following morning the weather had cleared up, so that I had no longer any reasonable excuse for postponing my departure. At breakfast I, therefore, announced my intention of leaving on the morrow. Each one expressed their sorrow in their own way, but I could not help remarking that Margaret's regrets were the least cordial of all. She merely said in a commonplace, matter-of-fact way that it was really too bad I could not, or rather would not, stay a little longer. She was invisible all the time from breakfast to dinner, being engaged in the dairy, her aunt told me, with Sheelah. I somehow felt provoked to think that that day, of all others, she should find so much to do in her dairy. Mr. Fitzgerald and I went out for a walk before dinner, and we talked of the family's approaching departure from Kilorgan.

"Now, Mr. Howard, will you do me a favor?" said Uncle Maurice in his courteous way.

"A hundred, my dear sir, if it were in my power!—Only speak your wish."

"Well! then, I should like you to ascertain from your cousin, and let me know as soon as possible, the exact time at which he requires us to give up possession of—of the old place." He could with difficulty get out the words I saw plainly.

"I shall do so at the earliest opportunity, Mr. Fitzgerald!" I replied "is there nothing else I can do for you?"

"Yes, I have one more favor to ask"—he replied in a tremulous voice, "will you spare time to write to me now and then, if only a few lines; I should be sorry to lose sight forever of one who has been more companionable to me than any one I have met for years. I hope you will not take the request amiss: you know age is selfish and exacting, and if I ask too much, make no scruple to tell me so."

"Mr. Fitzgerald," I said, after a pause, during which I was trying to restrain my emotion so as to speak as composedly as I thought necessary, "Mr. Fitzgerald, I have only to say that I esteem myself highly honored by your request. Even if you had not asked me I should have written all the same."

"Thank you, Mr. Howard, thank you!—age is slow to make friends, but when made it holds them fast."

During dinner we were all more silent than usual; the meal over, and we returned to the parlor, Margaret again withdrew, saying that she had still an hour's work to do before she could join us. Mr. Fitzgerald and I played a few games of backgammon, after which Aunt Ella asked me to read to her,—she was fond, she said, of hearing me read, and it would be long before she should have that pleasure again. I said I hoped not, and taking up the volume of poetry from which I had been reading to her the previous

day,—it was Thomson's "Seasons,"—turned over the leaves till I came to the poet's description of winter, and began to read—

"Through the hush'd air the whitening shower descends,
At first thin-wavering, till at last the flakes
Fall broad and wide and fast, dimming the day
With a continual flow. The cherish'd fields
Put on their winter robe of purest white:
'Tis brightness all, save where the new snow melts
Along the mazy current. Low the woods
Bow their hoar head; and ere the languid sun,
Faint from the west, emits his evening ray;
Earth's universal face, deep hid and chill,
Is one wide dazzling waste that buries wide
The works of man."

"That is very good, so far as it goes," said a voice that made me start and look up in surprise. Margaret was standing beside me with her beaming smile: "After all, I do not like that passage of Thomson's quite so well as a similar one of Cowper's;—you know it, of course," and she repeated in her clear, musical voice:

"O Winter! ruler of th' inverted year,
Thy scatter'd hair with sleet-like ashes fill'd,
Thy breath congeal'd upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fringed with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age: thy forehead wrapt in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car indebted to no wheels,
But urged by storms along its slippery way;—
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,
And dreaded as thou art."

"But better still," she went on, with a brighter

glow on her cheek, "I like the ringing sound of Eliza Cooke's description of winter,—reminding one of 'the merry sleigh bells' of northern climes :

" ' We know 'tis good that old Winter should come,
Roving a while from his Lapland home,
'Tis fitting we should hear the sound
Of his reindeer sledge on the slippery ground ;

" ' For his wide and glittering cloak of snow
Protects the seeds of life below ;
Beneath his mantle are nurtured and born
The roots of the flowers, the germs of the corn.

" ' The whistling tone of his pure strong breath
Rides purging the vapors of pestilent death.
I love him, I say, and avow it again,
For God's wisdom and might show well in his train.'

" But I have interrupted you, Mr. Howard ! pray continue !—Not Thomson, though,—unless you prefer him yourself."

" I prefer, on this occasion, whatever you ladies prefer," I replied. " Miss Fitzgerald, what shall I read ?"

" Oh ! let Margaret choose," said gentle Aunt Ella ; " what she likes I like, too !"

" Suppose he read 'The Fire-Worshippers ?' said Uncle Maurice.

" No," said Margaret, " I have got something here I would rather hear Mr. Howard read. It suits his voice." And taking down Mrs. Heman's poems from the hanging shelves which contained her library she opened it at the " Cathedral Hymn," beginning

" A dim and mighty minster of old time !"

and requested me to read it. I did so. "Now the 'Greek Funeral Chant!'" said Margaret again, and I read that, too, which having done, my young hostess playfully took the book from my hand, saying I had read enough for one day.

"What a pity it is," she said, going to the window, "that there is so much snow on the ground; I saw the new moon yesterday evening for the first time, so we shall have moonlight early to-night, and we could have had a pleasant walk either before or after tea."

"In which case," I said, "I should have petitioned for another visit to your mountain solitude, Miss Margaret! I should like to have seen it once again."

"Why, of course, you will see it often again should your cousin see fit to make Kilorgan his home."

"Possibly I may—but—it will not be quite the same."

"Well! it will remind you of us, at all events, said uncle Msurice; "you cannot help thinking of us while at Kilorgan."

"And do you suppose I will *only* think of you then?" I asked reproachfully; "are happy hours so soon forgotten? are they not 'to memory dearer' when they have merged into the vanished past? My dear sir, you know little of Edward Howard if you think he could ever forget——"

"Our Limerick 'Castle of Indolence!'" put in Margaret with a laugh which somehow grated harshly on my ear. Yet why should I be annoyed at the

wayward girl for showing how little she felt, or was likely to feel, my absence?—There was little of sentimentality about Margaret Fitzgerald, and she was too frank to feign a feeling which she had not. Still I thought she might have shown less *brusquerie* in interrupting me as she did.

Just then Mr. Fitzgerald remembered that he had some letters to write, and left the room for that purpose. There was silence for a few moments, then Margaret said—"Aunt Ella, will you tell us that story about the Earl of Desmond and the Banshee?"

"I shall be happy to do so, my child, but it is a wild tale, fitter for children than for grown people. I remember how fond of it you used to be, Margaret, years ago when you were a little child."

"And I can hear it still with pleasure, aunt, perhaps for the very reason that I loved it as a child. This superstition of the Banshee, Mr. Howard, is, I believe, peculiar to us Irish, and it has in it a sort of wild and melancholy beauty that cannot fail to strike you."

"I have often read stories of your Banshee," I said, "but I never *heard* one, and should like of all things to hear your aunt tell it, if it be not too much to ask."

"Oh! not at all, Mr. Howard, not at all!—the story is but short, after all. It is one of our family traditions. I really cannot say which Earl of Desmond is the hero of it, but that is of little consequence, for," she added with a smile, "as the Banshee, of course, followed the family, the same may have occurred to

almost any of the earls. This particular story relates, however, that the earl had a beautiful young wife, whom he dearly loved, and was himself in the prime of life when one stormy evening he was riding home to Shannid Castle—the principal seat of the family—after a short absence, with only a few attendants. As the earl advanced the storm and the scene grew wilder; black clouds overspread the sky like a funeral pall, and the wailing wind went sweeping by in loud and fitful gusts. The thunder peal and the lightning flash came faster and faster, and it seemed as though death were abroad in the air, so dismal was the night. But a stouter heart than Desmond's was not in all Munster, and a bolder hand than his never reined steed on the Shannon side. On he dashed, without stop or stay, cheering his good steed with many a soothing word, and little heeding the terrors of the scene. His sole thought was of Eva, his beautiful wife, sitting lonely in her midnight bower, awaiting his return, her lovely cheek blanched with fear for him as the wild storm raged round her castle walls. He had promised her that that day now past should not close on his absence, and though he lived but to reach her side and clasp her once again to his heart, he must on, still on. He knew not, and cared not, that he had left his followers miles behind, and was himself, with his steed, the only living thing on that drear mountain waste over which he swept with the whirlwind's speed. The way was well known to him, and the lightning guided his headlong course.

The mountain was passed, at length, and the earl reined in his horse a moment as the sound of rushing waters came up from the glen below amid the pitchy darkness. 'Now, my good steed, now or never!' said the solitary rider, patting the neck of his charger, 'cross but this water, and home is won,' and drawing the rein tighter he urged his snorting steed into the swollen stream, usually so placid, then rushing like a torrent through the glen. The clouds opened at the moment, and the pale flickering moon shed her blessed light on the traveller's dangerous way. 'Thank Heaven!' he cried, and the next moment he and his noble steed were stemming the boiling, seething waters. Happily the stream was not broad, and a very few moments brought horse and rider to the opposite bank. Shaking the water from his long thick mane, the gallant charger sprang out again, and hill and wood and moorland flew by in rapid succession till Shannid's towers rose fair to view through the misty moonbeam's light. A cry of joy broke from the earl's parched lips, but as if in mocking answer, came on the breeze the loud wail of sorrow. 'Hark! what sound is that?' said the earl to himself, as he slackened his pace somewhat in pity for his jaded steed; 'was not that the *caoine*?—Nay, it was but the fitful blast,' and on he dashed again. Then louder and wilder rose the cry, and the earl could no longer doubt that it was a woman's voice wailing as for the dead. The sound seemed to come from a particular spot on the road in front of the traveller

and curious to see what it meant, he went on at full speed. Dark clouds were drifting across the firmament, but at intervals the moon shone out with a watery gleam, making objects dimly visible. A solitary oak, the growth of centuries, shaded the road at one particular spot, and as the earl approached the dark shadow it flung across his pathway, he saw a female form crouching by the trunk of the tree, her white garments falling like a shroud around her, her hair dishevelled, and her upraised hands clasped as if in supplication, while at times she clapped them together in that peculiar way which, denoting heartfelt, unutterable sorrow, was used by the professional 'keen-ers' whose lugubrious trade it was to wail the dead. Ever as the earl approached the piteous cry rose louder and louder, the lonesome echoes of the place making doleful chorus, mingling sadly with the hoarse voice of the wind that still swept down at intervals from the mountains.

"The earl slackened his reign on reaching the tree; supposing at first that the figure before him might be some unhappy woman claiming assistance, he was about to accost her, but she vanished before his eyes, and only the dark trunk of the ancient oak was visible where the moonbeams struggled through the dense foliage. But still the wailing cry was abroad on the blast, and the earl rode on, his blood tingling in his veins as the conviction forced itself upon him that he had seen and heard a being from the other world.

"A few moments more brought him to the drawbridge of Shannid Castle; to his surprise and indignation he found the portcullis raised, while no warder's challenge greeted him from the battlements; on he rode through the courtyard; no horse-boy was there to take his charger, no gentlemen to receive him, all was dark and silent; entering the hall, he found the same loneliness and desertion; no feast was spread, no minstrel tuned the harp, no faggot blazed on the dark, cold hearth; and hark! what sound was that that reached his ear? Was it still the weird mourner of the heath? had she followed him to his home with her dismal voice of sorrow?—And the sound seemed to come from his lady's chamber!

"Thither he directed his steps, his heart growing heavier at every step; on reaching the door of the room where he expected to meet his treasured wife, and forget in her fond smile of welcome all the terrors of the night, his heart ceased to beat, his chest heaved convulsively, and the blood in his veins seemed changed to ice; on her couch lay the Countess Eva, his young, his beautiful, his cherished wife, in the calm repose of death and clothed in the ghastly habiliments of the grave, the lighted tapers at her head casting a lurid glare on the still, white face; her weeping attendants knelt in silence round the bed, and the keeners, rocking to and fro, wailed the blighted flower of Desmond!—Eva was dead; and the proud, strong heart of the warlike earl was crushed and bro-

ken for evermore ! Few as the days of his absence were they had robbed him of his richest treasure !”

“ Truly a sad story,” I remarked, “ but a strange and beautiful superstition that of the Banshee.”

“ If the old people are to be believed,” said Margaret. “ each of the old families had its attendant spirit who thus gave warning of approaching death. In James Clarence Mangan’s Irish Anthology we find, translated from the Irish, a lament for one of the Catholic Geraldines, Sir Maurice Fitzgerald, killed in Flanders in 1642, in which the Banshee is made to figure.”

“ Oh ! yes, Margaret,” said her aunt, “ I should like you to repeat it for Mr. Howard—I know you have it by heart.”

“ If I might venture to add my request to your aunt’s, Miss Margaret,” I said, “ I would be tempted to do so.”

Margaret bowed and smiled : “ Well ! as it relates to the Geraldines—and to the Banshee—I suppose I must, premising that Sir Maurice Fitzgerald was Knight of Kerry, one of the minor branches of the Geraldine tree, and that the stanzas I am about to repeat are given as an abridged translation from the Irish. From it you may understand what a hold the Geraldines had obtained on the Irish heart :

“ ‘ There was lifted up one voice of woe,
One lament of more than mortal grief,
Through the wide South to and fro,
For a fallen chief.

In the dead of night that cry thrill'd through me
 I look'd out upon the midnight air ;
 Mine own soul was all as gloomy,
 And I knelt in prayer.

" 'O'er Loch Gur that night, once—twice—yea, thrice,—
 Pass'd a wail of anguish for the Brave,
 That half curdled into ice
 Its moon-mirroring wave.
 Then uprose a many-toned wild hymn in
 Choral swell from Ogra's dark ravine,
 And Mogeely's Phantom Women
 Mourn'd the Geraldine !

" 'Far on Carah Mona's emerald plains
 Shrieks and sighs were blended many hours
 And Fermoy in fitful strains
 Answer'd from her towers
 Youghal, Keenalmesky, Kemokilly,
 Mourn'd in concert, and their piercing ~~Acen~~
 Woke to wondering life the stilly
 Glens of Inchiqueen.

" 'From Loughmoe to yellow Dunanore
 There was fear ; the traders of Tralee
 Gather'd up their golden store,
 And prepared to flee
 For in ship and hall, from night till morning,
 Show'd the first faint beamings of the sun,
 All the foreigners heard the warning
 Of the Dreaded One !

" 'This,' they spake, 'portendeth death to us,
 If we fly not swiftly from our fate !
 Self-conceited idiots ! thus
 Ravingly to prate !
 Not for base-born higgling Saxon trucksters
 Ring laments like these by shore and sea
 Not for churls with souls like hucksters
 Waileth our Banahoe !

“ ‘ For the high Milesian race alone
Ever flows the music of her woe
For slain heir to bygone throne,
And for Chief laid low !
Hark ! . . . Again, methinks, I hear her weeping
Yonder ! Is she near me now, as then ?
Or was it but the night-wind sweeping,
Down the hollow glen ! ’ ”

The musical accents fell no more on my ear, but the solemn strain lingered in my heart, and I said within myself—“ No wonder the spirits of air should weep with the children of earth when such chieftains passed away ! They were a grand race, those Geraldines ! ”

“ I am sorry I can hear no more of your uncle’s stories for the present,” I said to Margaret, but she placed her finger on her lips and pointed to her aunt, who had fallen asleep in her high-backed chair. The room was already darkening in the short winter twilight, and the crescent moon had just made her appearance above one of the mountains. The scene was inexpressibly sweet and solemn, and by a common impulse Margaret and I approached a window. We stood side by side looking out through the gathering shades on the dark mountains and the blue sky above them, the clear, cold moon and her attendant star, “ the first star of even.” Neither spoke for some time ; it was the hour when hearts are heavy with thought, and even the troubled spirit rests a while on the halcyon wing of the tranquil eve. But the silence at length became embarrassing, and I was

anxious to avail myself of the last opportunity I might have of speaking to Margaret on a subject that engrossed all my thoughts.

"It is a hard necessity, my dear Miss Fitzgerald, that obliges you to leave Kilorgan. And to see it pass into stranger hands."

"It is a hard necessity, Mr. Howard, but hard as it is, there is no use in repining over it. The hardest of all, to me, is the thought of what it will cost my uncle and aunt to tear themselves away from the dear old place—which has so long sheltered them and their fallen fortunes. The place where so many of their kindred have lived and died."

"Will you pardon me," I said, "if I venture to give expression to a thought that has often occurred to me of late?"

She looked at me in surprise, but as she made no answer I went on: "My cousin is young and unmarried. Now suppose when you and he become acquainted with each other that you should be mutually pleased and——" I paused. Margaret had suddenly raised her flashing eyes to my face, and I somehow shrank from finishing the sentence.

"Why not go on, Mr. Howard?" she coldly asked. "Why not say, what I see you mean, that probably your cousin might take pity on the daughter of Gerald Fitzgerald, and ask her to secure a home in her father's house for herself and those dear to her by what the French call *un mariage de convenance*? Have I read your thought aright?"

"As regards the *mariage* yes, as regards the *convenance*, or the taking pity, &c, no—decidedly no!—But suppose my cousin should become a suitor for your hand, it would surely be an additional motive for your accepting him,—always provided you found him to your liking,—that by doing so you kept Kilorgan in the family?"

"Pardon me, Mr. Howard! it would *not* be an additional motive," said Margaret Fitzgerald proudly, almost haughtily; "I will have no such suppositions made, and I tell you plainly that, for the very reason that it would be really *un mariage de convenance* to me, I would not listen for a moment to any such proposal from the new master of Kilorgan!—No! no! low as she has fallen in point of fortune, Margaret Fitzgerald has not fallen, and with God's help never *will* fall so low as to sell herself and her womanly pride for a home or a position. Were I to forget so far the blood that is in my veins, I am very sure that neither my uncle nor aunt would accept such a sacrifice."

"Then you would not marry my cousin, were he agreeable to you in other respects, simply because he has bought Kilorgan?"

"Not because he has *bought* it"—she said with emphasis,—“understand me, Mr. Howard, once for all!—I owe your cousin no ill will for having acquired a property which once was mine; but being the owner of it, I would *not* marry him were he to ask me to-morrow, and that for the simple reason that it would

be contrary to my notions of self-respect. But really it is too absurd to talk seriously on such a subject," she laughingly added,—“I am sure you did but jest.”

“Upon my honor, I was serious!”

“At which I cannot but wonder, Mr. Howard! your cousin has as little reason to be obliged to you as—as I have.” Then she added with a sweet seriousness, her humid eyes resting on the pale fair planet whose faint light gave a more tender charm to her face,—“The marriage tie is not lightly to be spoken of,—if it be, as it ought to be, the union of two hearts for weal or woe, for all the years of one life, at least!”

We were again silent; I was thinking of Margaret of Branksome—

“Her blue eyes sought the west afar
For lovers love the western star,”—

and wondering whether Margaret Fitzgerald “loved the western star.” It was merely a matter of curiosity, but as I marked the pensive look that gradually overspread her speaking face while she stood gazing on “the shadowy splendor” of that “star of the west” by poets sung, I would have given much to know. And yet what imported it to me whether the ex-heiress of Kilorgan had a heart to bestow or not?

All at once she turned away from the window and burst into a merry laugh, saying, as she went to light the candles which stood ready on a table at one end of the room: “Really I should become quite sentimental, Mr. Howard, if I stood there much longer.

And you would probably take me for a moonstruck damsel who fancied herself in love with some paragon of perfection——”

“Some Sir Charles Grandison or Lord Mortimer,” I said, catching her thought and laughing, too.

“Precisely, Mr. Howard,—or—your cousin, the Master of Kilorgan (*vile* ‘Bride of Lammermoor’!)—By the way, is *he* much of a paragon?”

“Not much like either of the incomparables before mentioned,” I replied in the same tone; “compared with such models, you would find him, I fear, somewhat commonplace,—a mere ordinary mortal, nothing more.”

“Oh! there is Aunt Ella awake. I fear I disturbed you, dear aunt, with my boisterous merriment.”

“Not at all, my dear,” replied her gentle aunt, “I slept as much as I would wish to sleep now, and I assure you I feel quite refreshed after my nap. I suppose it is almost tea-time. It must be near night.”

“I have just lit the candles, aunt, and now that you are awake to keep Mr. Howard company, I will go and see to the tea.”

She had but just gone when Uncle Maurice came in; he had finished all his letters, he said, and could now enjoy our society for the evening. During the half hour or so that elapsed before tea, the kind old gentleman told me some more of his old-time stories, which, with other matters, will be found in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

"**GERALD**, the ninth Earl of Kildare," said Mr. Fitzgerald, "was one of the handsomest men of his time. He was still young when he accompanied his sovereign, Henry VIII., then in his younger and better days, to meet Francis I. of France, and was one of the magnificent nobles whose presence gave additional splendor to the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Old chroniclers tell that he was particularly remarked on that memorable occasion for the beauty of his person and the splendor of his equipments. This great earl was twice married; his first wife, a noble English lady, died of grief while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London awaiting his trial for alleged misdemeanors, such as consorting with the Irish enemy, and being over dilatory in marching to arrest that 'arch traitor,' the Earl of Desmond, then, as ever, obnoxious to the British authorities. Cardinal Wolsey was one of his bitterest enemies,—the proud, ambitious cardinal was no lover, but rather a hater, of the Irish enemy! In the course of their disputes before the king Earl Gerald gave the cardinal some hard knocks, which still more increased his swelling ire. On one occasion the cardinal, who was then all powerful, sent an order to the Tower to execute the Earl of Kildare on the morrow. It so hap-

pened that when the order was given to the Lieutenant of the Tower he was playing at shuffle-board* with the earl, and, without saying anything, he put the document in his pocket. The earl, seeing his countenance change, as he read the scroll, pleasantly remarked that it must be the harbinger of evil tidings, whereupon the lieutenant, with a pale face and trembling hand, gave it to him to read. 'Now, by St. Bride,'—the favorite saint, and, indeed, the patron of the Kildare Geraldines, her shrine being in the town of Kildare,—'by St. Bride, this cannot be. You must e'en go to the king this very night, and know from him whether he signed that document. They shall not play the game with Garrett of Kildare which they once did with Thomas of Desmond. I will not suffer my head to be chopped off without knowing by whose order it was done. So go you must, if you would have me hold you as a friend.'—'My good lord, I will go,' said the Lieutenant of the Tower, who was sorely grieved to think that so noble and generous a lord should come to such an end. By virtue of his office he had access to the king at any hour of the day or night, and, although he much feared the cardinal's displeasure, his affection for the princely Geraldine induced him to run the risk. Late though it was in the night, he went to the palace, demanded

* Shuffle-board, it will be seen, was then played by the highest in the realm. It would be something strange now to see a great lord and a high public officer "playing at shuffle-board." So times change!

an audience of the king, and showing him the warrant, told him the Earl of Kildare humbly desired to know if he had signed it. The king indignantly denied it, and immediately gave his signet to the lieutenant to have the order countermanded, whereat the cardinal was sore displeased. As yet Henry did not care to come to an open rupture with his powerful and arrogant minister. Soon after matters were so arranged that the earl was permitted to return to Ireland, but he did not return alone; he brought with him a second wife (two years having elapsed since the death of the former countess), the young and beautiful Lady Elizabeth Grey, granddaughter of Elizabeth Woodville, wife of Edward IV., and cousin-german to Henry VIII. By his first wife he had one son and four daughters,—that son was the brave but unfortunate youth known by the name of Silken Thomas! By his second wife the earl had two sons and three daughters. Of these daughters the eldest, Lady Margaret, who was deaf and dumb, died young; another, Lady Cecily, never married, but of the third, the Lady Elizabeth, Margaret shall tell you this evening; her story is one of great interest.

“It was this ninth earl who first built a college at Maynooth, and this was how it happened. His father, the eighth earl, had at his death left certain lands to be held in trust for the endowment of a college in connection with ‘the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Maynooth;’ his son, soon after coming to the title, when only twenty-seven years of age, petitioned

the Archbishop of Dublin for leave to found a college at Maynooth. The leave was given, and Earl Gerald built the college 'in a most beautiful form,' as chronicles tell, and endowed it with princely liberality. It was called the College of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Maynooth, and flourished till the Reformation, when, in 1538, it was suppressed with other religious houses.

"On the earl's return to Ireland, after his narrow escape from being executed through Wolsey's malice, he was appointed Lord Deputy for the second time in his life, and, after taking the oath, went in state to Thomas Court, his nephew, Con O'Neill, bearing the Sword of State before him, and there he gave a sumptuous entertainment to the Royal Commissioners. That was assuredly one of the proudest epochs in the long roll of the Geraldine history, when Kildare, triumphing over his powerful enemies, returned to his own country with increased honor and dignity as Viceroy of Ireland.

"For a few years Kildare reigned right royally, making war on his own account still more than the king's, and strengthening his family from year to year by intermarriages both in and out of the Pale. Of his four daughters by the first wife he married the Lady Mary to O'Connor Faly, Lady Catherine to Lord Gormanstown, Lady Alice to Lord Slane, and the other, whose name I do not know, to the chief of Ely O'Carroll. But great and powerful as he was, there came a time when he was again summoned to

London to answer several serious charges, amongst others that of privately abetting his kinsman, the Earl of Desmond, who was known to be in treaty with the Emperor Charles V. to assist him with troops to liberate Ireland from the English. It was ever the same, you see, with the Desmond Geraldines; they were always suspected by the Government, and not without cause, it would seem, for those stout earls appear to have taken little trouble to conceal their dislike of British domination. It is probable that Kildare himself was more or less involved in Desmond's rebellious projects at that time, for he tried every means short of open disobedience to evade the king's mandate. He made various excuses to put off his voyage to England, and even sent his countess to beg her royal cousin to dispense with his going. But Kildare's enemies at Court were too powerful and too near the king to be easily thwarted, and Henry sent peremptory orders to the earl to go over without delay, giving him the privilege, however, of choosing a Deputy to hold office during his absence.

"The earl, with a heavy heart, prepared to obey the summons, and, hoping to secure a Deputy who would be ruled by him, he appointed his son Thomas Lord Offaly, then only twenty years of age, who was accordingly sworn in for such time as his father's absence should continue. The countess, who was still both young and beautiful, could not be persuaded from accompanying her lord to England, taking with her her children,

except Gerald, the eldest, who was ill of small-pox at the time in the Castle of Kilkea. It was a hard struggle for that loving heart, but conjugal affection and duty prevailed, and the sorrowing mother left her first-born to the care of some faithful attendants, his tutor, Father Leverous, remaining with him. The most tender love united Earl Gerald and his wife, as all the family annals mention; they were, so to say, wrapped up in each other, and many touching instances of their fond affection for each other are still on record. Elizabeth had inherited the beauty which won a crown for her grandmother, with the great additional advantage of being a better woman; she was, in all respects, a fitting wife for the brilliant and brave earl who, although then a year or two over forty, had lost none of the nobleness and manly beauty for which he had been conspicuous.

"When setting out for England the earl gave much serious advice to his son concerning the prudent management of State affairs, warning him above all things to do nothing rashly, and reminding him that his father's life and the fortunes of their house depended on his prudence and discretion. Thomas, of course, promised to obey his father's instructions."

"And well he did obey them!" I observed.

"Alas! yes, he was ill fitted for the serious responsibilities of the high office in which he was placed. You are, of course, familiar with the events of his brief and disastrous career."

"Probably not all," I replied, "but even as a child

I read of the Rebellion of Silken Thomas. But my reading of Irish history has not been very extensive, I am ashamed to say, and you may know much more than I do concerning that sad and most romantic story.’

“You are probably aware, then,” resumed Mr. Fitzgerald, “of how it came to pass that Lord Thomas, from being the King’s Deputy, became his sworn enemy. He was doing all he could to carry out his father’s instructions, when all at once a report reached him that that noble father had been executed in London. Maddened by the news—for he loved his father with all the fervor of his impassioned nature—he at once threw off all restraint, would listen to no advice, and swearing eternal enmity to England’s king, and a terrible revenge for his father’s death, he hastened to the Council Chamber to vent his rage. Some of the Lords of the Council who were friendly to his family besought him to have patience and wait till such time as he could learn whether the news he had heard was true before he committed himself by any overt act of rebellion; but the fiery Geraldine would hear nothing; John Allen, the English Archbishop of Dublin, an ancient enemy of his house, addressed him as ‘My Lord Deputy ironically advising him to keep the peace, whereupon Lord Thomas told him in a rage—‘Deputy me no Deputies,—I am not your King’s Deputy any longer, but his sworn enemy, his enemy to the death. So do I renounce my authority!’ and, to the grief of all pre-

sent who wished well to the house of Kildare, he threw the Sword of State on the table."

"Ah! that was when, as the poet sings,

'———Silken Thomas flung
King Henry's sword on council board, the English Thanes among!'"

"Precisely, and a sad act it was for the Geraldine race. From that day forth Thomas of Offaly waged bold and ceaseless war on the English power in Ireland. He rapidly overran a great portion of the Pale, planted his banner on towers and towns where it had not waved before, and threw the English of the country, and especially the enemies of the Geraldines, into consternation. Amongst these stood prominently forth before all the country, Archbishop Allen, already mentioned. This prelate, disagreeably conscious of the fact, was so sensible of his danger, that he endeavored to escape to his native England. Unhappily he did not succeed. The unfortunate prelate fell into the hands of the infuriated followers of Silken Thomas, who dragged him before their lord. The young Geraldine hated the man above all others on account of the part he, a creature of Wolsey's, had all along taken against his father, and he could scarcely control his rage on seeing him. The unhappy prelate, seeing the wrathful faces by which he was surrounded, fell on his knees and besought Lord Thomas to save his life. Unwilling to shed his blood, yet loathing the sight of him, the young nobleman turned his head aside, and with a gesture of disgust,

cried aloud in Irish—"take him away! take him away!"—Alas! the words were misconstrued, perhaps wilfully, and the ill-fated Allen was slain on the spot."

"Oh! Maurice, Maurice!" exclaimed his sister in a tone of horror, "what a fearful thing to tell!—No matter what the man was, being a priest and prelate, his life should have been sacred!"

"Undoubtedly, Ella," her brother replied, "and, whether Lord Thomas Fitzgerald was a party to the murder or not, he paid the penalty. The whole country was horror-struck at the sacrilegious act, and nothing prospered with him ever after. In a little while he and his five uncles (some of whom had never been in favor of the rebellion) were taken and sent to London, where they were imprisoned in the Tower. There it was that the unfortunate Thomas, now Earl of Kildare, learned, when too late, that his father had not been executed, and might possibly have been pardoned by the king as he had been years before, but that, hearing of his son's insensate conduct in rushing into a rebellion on a mere uncertain rumor, and still worse, of his excommunication on account of the murder of the Archbishop, he had died of grief; so that in addition to the other crimes for which he was accountable before God, he was now a parricide, the murderer of that princely father for whom he would have given his life a thousand times over.*

* The earl died in 1534, and was buried in St. Peter's Church in

"The earl was but 48 years of age when his brilliant career came to so sad an end. His countess was almost heart-broken and remained all her life a mourner. It is said that in her brother Lord Leonard Grey's princely mansion of Beau Manoir, to which she retired after her husband's death, she went every night before retiring to rest to look at a full-length portrait of the late earl which hung in one of the state apartments, and 'with solemn *congé*,' as the old chronicler says, would bid her lord good-night."

"A rare widow her ladyship was!" I observed; "we *read* of few such, and *see* still fewer."*

"Probably because there were, or are," said Aunt Ella, "few such husbands to mourn as Gerald of Kildare. In mind, and heart, and person, he was a man amongst men."

"Silken Thomas was not the son of that lady?" I asked.

the Tower. In 1580, when a certain Sir Ralph Hopton, son of the Lieutenant of the Tower, was being interred, the following inscription was found on a chest under the earth: "Here lieth the corpes of the Lord Gerald Fitz Gerald, Earle of Kildare, who deceased the 12th December, in the year of Our Lord M^{CCCC}XX^{XXXX}IIII., on whose sole Jesu have mercy."—*Lodge*.

Stanihurst describes him in these terms: "This nobleman being valiant and well-spoken, was nothing inferior to his father in martial prowess. He was a wise and prudent man in war, valyant without rashness, and politique without treachery. . . . His great hospitality is to this day rather of each man commended, than of any one followed. He was so religious, addicted to the serving of God, as what tyme soever he travayled to any part of the country, such as were of his chapel should be sure to accompany him."

"Oh no! he was only her stepson. You remember the earl's first wife left that one son and four daughters. Poor Lord Thomas! he and his five noble uncles, Sir James, Sir John (who was a Knight of St. John of Jerusalem), Sir Oliver, and Sir Walter Fitzgerald, were executed together on Tower Hill! Never was fault or folly more severely expiated than his!"

"That was a fearful blow to the Geraldines," I said; "it is probable that their enemies thought they had made an end of them—at least of that particular line."

"If so, their ends were providentially defeated. You remember my telling you that Gerald, the eldest son of the earl's second wife, was left sick in Ireland at the time when his father and mother, with their younger children, went to London. Well! this boy, who was, of course, recognized amongst his relatives and dependents as Earl of Kildare, and whose life had become so precious, was at once removed from Kilkea Castle and conveyed with great risk and with much difficulty to his aunt, Lady Eleanor McCarthy, widow of McCarthy Reagh, where he was cared and protected, his tutor, Father Leverous, still accompanying him. There the poor little earl remained for some time, in despite of sundry efforts made, and even proclamations offered for his delivery to the Government. The story of this eleventh Earl of Kildare is one of the most romantic in history——"

"But it is too long to be told now, Uncle Maurice!"

said Margaret, who had just entered the room; "tea is on the table, and that once over, you can tell Mr. Howard some, at least, of the strange vicissitudes, romantic adventures, and 'hair-breadth 'scapes by flood and field' of that handsome and chivalrous young nobleman, the half-brother of Silken Thomas."

I was half sorry for the interruption, and I said so.

"You need not have told me," said Margaret, with her low, musical laugh, "I saw you were sorry. But, never mind, we shall have a long evening."

"And I promised Mr. Howard, Margaret," said her uncle, "that you would tell him about this young earl's sister, the Lady Elizabeth."

"What! Surrey's Geraldine! Of course I will, if it were only by way of change. Come now to tea!"

The meal was not so cheerful as usual; the old people were evidently depressed in spirits, and I was little less so; Margaret alone talked and acted as usual, and her total unconcern was little flattering to me, seeing that I was about to leave them, perhaps forever, after forming one of their family circle, so to say, for weeks long. I began to think that Margaret Fitzgerald had less heart than I had supposed, or that all she had was absorbed in the strong affection she undoubtedly cherished for her uncle and aunt. And yet when I remembered her tender and active charity, her compassion for the poor, and how much she contrived to do for them out of her own poverty, I could hardly suspect her of wanting feeling. And, after all, what right had I to expect that

she should either feel or manifest any sorrow for my departure, I, the acquaintance of a few short weeks?

"Some more tea, Mr. Howard?"

The question broke in abruptly on my train of thought, and I answered in such an abstracted way that Margaret said with a smile—

"Your thoughts must have travelled a long way off, Mr. Howard! you are thinking, doubtless, of some one of 'The Happy Homes of England.'"

"Rather of a happy home in Ireland," I replied in a half serious tone; "of one which I must soon leave."

"Alas! poor Ireland!" said Margaret with real feeling. "No poet sings of *her* 'happy homes!'—And yet," she added with a thoughtful look, "poor as she is, she has her happy homes, too!"

"That *I* can testify," I said with a moistened eye and a quivering lip, as we left the table.

The prayers were said earlier than usual that evening, and then we gathered once more round the fire-side, and while the moon shed her silver light through the windows, and the fair scene without looked grander and more solemn in the mingled light and shade of the still hour, Margaret Fitzgerald told her sad, sweet tale of other days.

"You must already be familiar, Mr. Howard," she began, "with the name and fame of Elizabeth of Desmond, the beloved of the gallant and accomplished, but ill-fated Surrey. You remember how Sir Walter Scott introduces her sad story, by way of episode, in the '*Lay of the Last Minstrel*'?"

"My recollection of it," I said evasively, "is not very distinct." I wanted to hear Margaret tell the whole story. By a very slight effort of memory I could have repeated the entire passage to which she alluded: it was one of my favorite passages in a favorite poem.

Margaret smiled. She saw that my memory was better than I pretended, but she only shook her head with sportive grace and commenced:

"This fairest flower of Desmond was, as my uncle has probably told you, the daughter of Earl Gerald who died in the Tower, and inherited from him, as well as from her mother, that wondrous beauty which dazzled all beholders. After her father's death, she was taken to Hunsdon, the residence of the Princess Mary (afterwards Queen Mary), and there brought up as became her illustrious birth. When her education was completed she was appointed one of the maids of honor to the Princess. Her beauty was so remarkable that she was called 'The Fair Geraldine,'* and although her proper name was Elizabeth, that poetical appellation is the one by which she is ever since known. Her charms were the theme of poet's lays, even in her early girlhood, and the noblest knights of England were proud to wear her colors. Amongst the most devoted of her admirers was the Earl of Surrey, then in the hey-day of youth and pros-

* Walpole speaks of the Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald as "the greatest beauty of her time"

perity, himself the loved, the admired of all, and alas! the envied, too!"

"Envy is sure to follow such prosperity as his," I said. "Well had it been for that noblest of the Howards that Henry had never taken him into favor, and that he did favor him is matter of surprise, for Henry Howard was no sycophant, and never sacrificed one principle to the tyrant's capricious will."

"Ah!" said Margaret, with a heightened color on her cheek, "I forgot that you had a special interest in this story—that the noble Surrey was a Howard!"

I smiled. "Well! now that you are reminded of it, I must beg you to be careful of what you say in his regard, for there is a notion very prevalent in our family that your humble servant here present bears a strong resemblance to that same Surrey, as seen in the portraits of him which are still preserved."

"And that is true," said Mr. Fitzgerald, "you do very much resemble the portrait of him given by Lodge in his peerage! I remember having seen it years ago in Lord Dunsany's library. There is the same broad, intellectual brow—

" 'A brow that was built for the throne of the mind,'—and the same peculiar expression of mingled thought and feeling in the eyes. You are decidedly like him, Mr. Howard!"

"A flattering likeness you have drawn of both, Mr. Fitzgerald," I laughingly said—"but we are wandering from the main point, which is Miss Margaret's story."

Roused from the *rêverie* into which she had fallen, the young lady started, and hastily resumed her narrative

"The Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald was little more than a child when Lord Surrey first saw her, but even then she had power to stir his impassioned nature to its depths, and to inspire that fervid strain which has come down to our days, and will probably live as long as our language. You know that elegant sonnet of his, Mr. Howard!—the first sonnet, by the way, ever written in England."

"Yes, I have known it since my boyhood." And I went on to repeat it:

" ' From Tuscoane came my lady's worthy race ;
 Fair Florence was sometime her ancient seat.
 The western isle, whose pleasant shore doth face
 Wild Camber's cliffs, did give her lively heat.
 Foster'd she was with milk of Irish breast ;
 Her sire an Earl ; her dame of Prince's blood.
 From tender years in Britain doth she rest,
 With Kinge's child ; where she tasteth costly food.
 Hunsdon did first present her to mine een
 Bright is her hue, and Geraldine she hight.
 Hampton me taught to wish her first for mine,
 And Windsor, alas ! doth chase me from her sight.
 Her beauty of kind ; her virtues from above ;
 Happy is he that can attain her love.'

"The description is a quaint one to us now, but it is graphic enough for all purposes, and highly poetical."

"Yes, Surrey was a true poet," Margaret said ;
 "his 'Description of Spring' and his 'Complaint of a

Lover not, Beloved' are equal to anything of the kind in our language. There is a grace and delicacy, and, at the same time, an elevation of thought in all his compositions that make him well deserving of the high place he holds amongst the classic poets of Britain. And it appears he had a poet's heart as well as a poet's soul, for he loved the Lady Elizabeth, the 'fair Geraldine,' as he called her, as only poets can, with that chivalrous and romantic ardor, that profound reverence, so to say, which is passion without its gross earthly alloy.

"But Surrey was more than a maker of verses, however good; he was not only 'faithful in love' but 'gallant in war,' and on many a field of fair renown he maintained the peerless beauty of Elizabeth of Desmond, and made her the envy of many a fair and noble lady who sighed for his love in vain. Even in far off Italy he successfully defended her claim to unequaled beauty at a grand tournament in Florence, the cradle of her race, and we can well imagine the interest taken in the issue of the contest by the proud and noble lords of the Gherardini race, who still regarded the Irish Geraldines as their kindred.

"It was during his stay in Florence on that occasion that the scene occurred which the Wizard of the North has so effectively described. Cornelius Agrippa, the celebrated alchemist, and as some would have it, magician, was then at the height of his fame, and to him Surrey went, beseeching him, if his art could do it, to show him the lady of his love as she was at

that moment. The magician, grimly smiling at the doubt implied in the earl's words as to the power of his art, took his noble visitor to an inner apartment where was placed his magic mirror, and warning him not to speak, see what he might, unveiled the mirror and commenced his incantations, or alchemycal operations, whichever they might have been. It was a strange scene surely, the majestic form of the magician, clothed in a tight-fitting tunic of sable velvet, girt round the waist with a zone on which were traced mystic words in some unknown characters, the language, probably, of some extinct and forgotten race, his face like that of a marble statue, with that expression half stern, half sweet, peculiar to himself,—and by him the stately and elegant English noble in his slashed doublet and silken hose, his plumed cap in his hand, his fine and youthful face reflecting the sweet thoughts that filled his heart and the eagerness of expectation.

“All at once the smooth and polished surface of the mirror became covered, as it were, with a thick mist which, after a little, clearing away, a picture was traced on the mirror, or rather a scene opened before the gazing eye. It was a large and lofty room furnished with regal splendor, and dimly lighted by one solitary taper which shed its broadest ray on a couch whereon reclined a female form of matchless beauty. A young and slender form it was, beautiful in its chaste repose. The lady was reading by the taper's light, and from the ineffable tenderness and sweet rejoicing

depicted on her face, it was clear that what she read found an echo in her heart; Surrey started at the sight, and forgetting Agrippa's warning, was about to express his delight, but the magician turning half round placed his finger on his lips, then pointed to the ivory tablets from which the Lady Elizabeth (for she it was) seemed to read, and a thrill of joy ran through the earl's frame as he recognized his own gift; they were his verses that so charmed in the lone night hours, the pure and gentle soul of 'the fair Geraldine!' He would fain have gazed longer on the gracious vision, but it might not be. Slowly it faded from before his eyes, and a thick mist overspread the mirror as before; soon the mist disappeared and the polished surface only reflected the present scene with the stately forms of the Italian alchemist and the English noble!"

There was a short silence; then I said: "It is strange that, after all these 'love passages,' as people then would say, Lord Surrey and the fair Geraldine lived and died divided; Surrey married the Lady Frances De Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford."

"And Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald," said Margaret, "strange to say, became the second wife of Sir Anthony Brown, Master of the Horse to King Henry VIII., a man old enough to be her father. A most unromantic ending surely!"

"Well! now for the 'fair Geraldine's' brother Gerald," said Uncle Maurice. "It is growing late and I must hurry with my story."

"I think you had better leave Gerald's story for some other opportunity, Uncle Maurice," suggested Margaret, "and tell something more of Silken Thomas and his uncles. The other is too long for to-night."

"I think so, too, so I act on your suggestion. When the tide of fortune turned against Silken Thomas, Mr. Howard, and most of his castles were taken by the king's troops, they at length sat down before Maynooth, the strongest of all the Geraldine fortresses, and acknowledged to be the richest dwelling in Ireland at the time. Although the garrison was large and amply provided for even a long siege, Lord Thomas set out himself for Connaught in order to solicit strong reinforcements wherewith to attack the besiegers in the rear. He left as Governor of the Castle his own foster brother, Christopher Parese, than whom he thought he could have chosen no better. The siege commenced under the direction of Sir William Skeffington, then Lord Deputy, and was carried on with great vigor. The garrison, when summoned to surrender, had returned a scoffing answer, and boldly refused, telling the Lord Justice to take the castle if he could. For full two weeks the castle was subjected to a terrific fire, but very little progress was made, and the arrival of Lord Offaly with his reinforcements might any hot be expected, when all at once a letter was shot on the point of an arrow into the Deputy's camp, stating that the Governor of the Castle would secretly ad-

mit the English by a private postern, if a certain sum were given him, together with a life annuity. An answer was sent back in the same way, agreeing to the traitor's terms, and Parese, taking the precaution of setting the soldiers of the guard drunk, made a sign to the English, who, by the gray light of the dawn, placed their scaling ladders to the walls, and effected an entrance with little loss. That same afternoon the Lord Deputy entered the castle, and, as chronicles tell—'Great and rich was the spoil; such store of beds, so many goodly hangings, so rich a wardrobe, such brave furniture, as truly it was accounted, for household stuff and utensils, one of the richest earl's houses under the Crown of England.' Even the English Lord Justice was amazed at the splendor he beheld. He appears to have felt a generous sorrow for the ruin of the princely owners. Summoning the traitor Parese before him, he told him he was going to give him the promised reward, 'but first,' said he, 'I would have you tell me in what relation you stand to the Lord Thomas, and what he hath done for you.' The wretched Parese with a bold and confident front, imagining he was but establishing his claim to yet higher reward, told how he was the foster-brother of Lord Offaly, and how he owed everything to him and to his family, who had ever loaded him with gifts and honors. 'Then Parese,' said the Lord Deputy, 'how couldst thou betray so good a master?'—'Pay him the sum promised,' he said to his attendants, 'then let

his head be chopped off.'—'If I had known this before, said the bold ruffian, 'thou shouldst not have had the castle on such easy terms.' Whereupon one Boyce, a gentleman who was a vassal and dependent of the Earl of Kildare's, called out in Irish—'Too late,' and that word is ever since used as a proverb in that part of the country—'Too late,' quoth Boyce! So the base Parsee was rewarded for betraying the castle by losing his head.

"There is a story told, too, that when the uncles of Lord Thomas were being taken to England, three at one time, and two at another, one of them, Sir Richard, kept amusing his brothers on the voyage to England (then a very tedious one) by telling them old stories and passages from books, he being what was called in those days 'a bookish man.' On one occasion he asked the captain what was the name of his vessel. 'The Cow,' was the reply. Thereupon the bold Geraldine turned pale, and said to his brothers—'Now Jesu have mercy on our souls, I fear me much we shall never, any of us, see Ireland again!' And they asking why he thought so, he told them that he remembered having read an ancient prophecy that five earl's brothers should be carried in a cow's belly to England, and thence never return. Hearing this the others were sore dismayed. A presentiment of coming evil weighed heavily upon them from that till the time of their tragic death, eleven months after. Their unfortunate nephew was five months in the Tower previous to their arrest, but all six were

executed together. In the State Prison of the Tower of London may still be seen the inscription *Thomas Fitz G.*, said to have been traced on the stone by the ill-fated Silken Thomas, then tenth Earl of Kildare. It is supposed that his death prevented the completion of the name."

"A sad fate was his," I observed with a sigh, "and a bloody doom befel the Geraldines that day on Tower Hill!"

"Truly yes, things looked dark just then with the race, for we read that all their relatives in Leinster, whether lay or ecclesiastical, were hunted for their lives, and despoiled of their possessions, the young Gerald escaping only by a wonderful interposition of Providence; whilst in Munster the Earl of Desmond was almost in a state of outlawry for his alleged treasons and secret correspondence with foreign princes to the great danger of the king's possessions in Ireland. Desmond managed to keep his enemies at bay, and was still lord of his broad domains, and the star of the Leinster Geraldines was soon to shine out again."

"And so ends our Geraldine stories, Mr. Howard, for the present, at least!" said Margaret,— "possibly forever!—Well! now I will sing you a song as this is the last night of your stay in Kilorgan—in our time!" she added in a lower tone, and I could see that her lip trembled.

"You have kindly anticipated the request I was about to make," I said.

The song she sang was Mrs. Crawford's ever beautiful "Kathleen Mavourneen," then newer, but not any more popular than it is to-day. I thought I had never heard her sing with more exquisite grace or feeling, and for many a long day and night, in many a lonely hour the tones of her voice, and the sweet strain she sang echoed in the silence and solitude of my heart.

Next day I left Kilorgan, and after a few days spent in Dublin, I returned to my English home.



CHAPTER XIII.

CHRISTMAS was near at hand when I left Kilorgan, and trees were bare and skies were dark. The mountains were wrapped in mist, and the face of nature was cold and wan. I parted my kind friends with a heavy heart. They stood all three on the steps, and when I leaned from the chaise window to take a last look at the dear old place, they were there still, the fairest picture my eyes had seen, and one that never faded from memory's page till I saw them again. In many a lonely hour that winter through, as I pored over musty tomes by the midnight lamp, in my law-chambers in London, that gracious picture came back in its vividness and made the dull page bright, bringing with it the beauty and freshness of spring, and the fairy visions of hope. Again that moonlight scene was before me, and the sweet melody of Margaret's voice was floating round me; the words of her vesper hymn were echoing in the silence of my heart, and I murmured low to myself: "*Ave Maris Stella! Hail, Star of the Sea!*" Then I thought of the beautiful prayers of the Rosary, in which I had so often joined at Kilorgan, and I felt springing up within me a joyful hope and trust in Mary's benigu

protection ; I raised my heart in prayer, and the clouds that obscured my soul were heavy and dark no longer. Light, for which I could not account, began to break the gloom that had of late settled down upon me. And all this from the remembered image of the group that stood watching my departure from that "old and rustic door!"

I had paid a short visit to my ancestral home in Surrey, where a maiden aunt, my more than mother, and two fair young sisters, my juniors by several years, dwelt together in untroubled peace, under the time-honored roof-tree of our fathers, amid its circling woods. But why was my spirit troubled as I approached the beautiful home of my childhood? Why did the blood forsake my cheek as I crossed the threshold? Why did my footsteps lag in crossing the hall where the armor and arms of the old Howards rattled in the gust that swept in from the door as I entered? Oh! the heart has its mysteries and its secret places, its voiceless solitudes, its deeper depths; nay, it is often a mystery to itself, and within its secret places lie nameless fears, and vague, unuttered yearnings for some bright ideal.

When I had exchanged joyful greetings with aunt and sisters, I glanced around the room, and in a corner at the farther end, by a window half hidden in the shade of the dark, heavy curtains, I saw the pale face and the young, slight figure my eyes had sought. It was Nina Ellersley, the orphan daughter of my mother's dearest friend, who had been brought

up in our family, and whom my mother, on her death-bed, had made me promise to marry as soon as she attained the age of twenty. And I had willingly consented, provided Nina was herself willing,—for Nina was rich, and young, and fair. What more could I desire, if happily she loved me?

Years had rolled on; Nina came of age; she was eighteen, and was made mistress of her father's wealth and her mother's jewels,—which my prudent aunt had hitherto kept in her own custody. It was plain to all our household that the fair girl loved me with more than a sister's love, and I fancied at times that I loved her well enough to look forward with hope and expectation to the time when we should plight our faith before the altar in our ancient chapel.

But as time passed, and Nina became more of the woman, less of the girl, I saw with a feeling of disappointment that there was a passive listlessness developing itself in her character, which threatened to snap the springs of mental and physical life. She had ever been gentle, timid, shy as a young gazelle; of late she had become reserved and melancholy, without any apparent cause for the change; a sort of dull inertness was creeping over her faculties that boded no good for the future. It was possible that I might have quickened her gentle, loving nature into life and warmth had I but made the attempt. But I could not feign what I did not feel, and whilst blaming myself for not paying more attention to Nina, I was sensible that every passing day made me less

willing to fulfil what yet I regarded as sacred,—my mother's last injunction. Every day and every hour the shadows darkened around me, and save in prayer, and my newly awakened hope in Mary Mother, I had no hope, no consolation.

I stood for a moment looking at Nina as she rose in her languid way to greet me; an unwonted blush was on her cheek, and her look was so humble, so beseeching, as it were, that I pitied the gentle creature whose drooping, fragile form suggested the idea of a pale lily trembling in the blast. But in my case pity was *not* akin to love, and even when the fair girl blushed and trembled with excess of joy at the sound of my voice and the touch of my hand, I was thinking of one far, far away in whom the buoyancy and freshness of youth was mingled with the soul and sense of mature years—one fitted to aid one in bearing life's burdens, and to grace and gladden life's hours of rest. Never had I looked down on poor Nina Ellersley from so far a height as I did that moment when she stood before me with downcast eyes and blushing cheek, and a tear trembling on her long silken lashes. I spoke to her kindly and gently, inquiring how she had been since I saw her last, but too keenly I felt the while that the place she ought to have in my heart it was beyond my power to give her. Poor Nina Ellersley! I think she saw it, too, for all at once the blood forsook her cheek, and with a heavy sigh she sank again on her chair.

From that hour I saw that Nina avoided me, al-

though I was resolutely bent on paying her such attention as I thought our relative positions required. For many days her sweet face was paler, sadder even than its wont, and her soft eyes wore a troubled, anxious look; she rarely spoke, and when she did, it was always to my aunt or my sisters; it seemed as though she had taken some sudden dislike to me, and I must confess I was rather pleased at the change, little flattering as it was to self-love or vanity. My sisters often reproached me for my cold indifference to Nina, and said that I was likely to lose her if I continued to treat her as I did. "Love," they said, "can bear much, but even Nina's love cannot bear your visible coldness." Then they would say, with girlish petulance, that they wished I had never gone to Ireland, for that I had never been the same, at least to Nina, since I came home. It was no use for me to ask—"Did I ever make love to Nina?" They would evade the question, and pout, and say I had no heart, that I didn't know the value of such a heart as Nina's, and so forth, to all of which I merely smiled, and said it was not my fault, that I loved Nina as well as I had ever loved her, and would be very sorry to give her pain. It was no use, Clara and Bertha would look at me with keen scrutiny, shake their pretty heads and turn to some other topic.

So time passed; Christmas came and went, but through all the festivities of an English manor-house at that joyous season Nina remained the same passive, joyless creature, with that restless, weary look

in her eyes that bespoke a heart ill at ease. Soon after the Christmas holidays, when I was about returning to London, my sister Clara told me that Nina wished us all to join her in a Novena she was making. Although surprised at the request I willingly consented, not without a certain curiosity as to what little Nina could be making a Novena for—at that particular time. I waited at the Hall till the nine days were over; then one clear, cold January morning I bade adieu to my aunt and sisters, and was leaving a kind message for Nina, who had not yet made her appearance, expressing my regret at not having seen her before I set out, when, on turning round, I saw her standing in the doorway, with such a smile on her face as I had not seen there for long.

“So you are going, Edward!” she said, in a cheerful voice. “Well! I am sorry, in one sense, and glad in another.”

“Glad!” I repeated. “And why glad, Nina?”

“Because,” she replied, and the faintest possible flush tinged her cheek, “because it will remove a temptation out of my way.”

More and more surprised, I asked what she meant.

“Why, just this, Edward!” she replied, with almost childish simplicity, “that I have been making that Novena in which you were all so kind as to join, that the Blessed Virgin might help me to put some one you know out of my head, and out of my heart, for I want both head and heart for God.”

“And what then?”

"Well! you know, if I were to see—to see—you, Edward, every day,"—and she looked up with a sort of sweet defiance, as though secure of victory,—“the old thoughts and hopes might come back again, and I might lose the precious grace which is the fruit of ever so much prayer. Edward! I want to give myself to God, and to Him alone. I thought I must tell you before you left us now, for when you come home again, Nina will be far away in the quiet cloister.”

Before I had recovered from my surprise, my sisters were loud in their reproaches.

“So, this was what you wanted us to pray for,” said Bertha. “You sly little puss!”

“I’m sure if we had known,” said Clara, “you might have prayed alone for us.”

“Be quiet, girls,” I said; “you have no right to blame Nina. But, Nina! answer me seriously: do you really wish to give me up?”

She raised her look to mine, and for a moment her purpose seemed shaken; it was but a moment, however,—the glow faded from her face like the last tint of sunset from the evening sky, and

“While her soft eye a sudden sorrow fill’d,”

she spoke these words in a clear, firm voice:

“Edward Howard, I once thought it would break my heart to do it, but through God’s grace I can do it now. Willingly, if not cheerfully, I make the sacrifice which I feel I am called on to make; my

resolution is taken to devote myself to God in holy religion. I do not ask your forgiveness, for I know you never loved me as I loved you! And I never blamed you, Edward, for I knew I could never be to you what your wife ought to be. I knew little Nina Ellersley was no wife for Edward Howard."

"You are far too humble, Nina, in your estimate of yourself," I said with some emotion, "but I cannot help thinking that you are acting wisely. Your nature is too sensitive to wrestle with this cold, hard world, and you are taking the only sure way to happiness. God bless you, Nina! when you think of Edward Howard remember always that if he did not love you as a lover, he loved you as a brother. Pray for me, Nina! that I may live and die as a Howard should!"

Nina disappeared, and turning round I saw my aunt sitting on a sofa with her handkerchief to her eyes, while my sisters pouted and seemed preparing for a joint attack. I looked at my watch; my horse was at the door, and I had scarce a moment if I would catch the next train.

"My dear aunt," I could barely wait to say, "this is all for the best. Believe me it is, and you will one day be convinced of it. You must reason these silly girls out of their anger. I will write you to-morrow or next day. Good-bye!"

I darted to the door, snatched the bridle from the hands of John Williams, our old groom, and dashed away at full speed, scarcely realizing in the hurry of the moment the change which my prospects had un-

gone during the last half hour. It was only when I found myself quietly seated in the railway car, and had time to collect my scattered thoughts, that I became aware of my freedom. Nina had voluntarily resigned her claim to my hand, she had chosen to be the bride of Heaven, my mother's injunction was no longer binding on me, and my tacit engagement to Nina was cancelled by her own act. When once I had convinced myself that this was a reality, not a dream, I raised my heart in gratitude to Her who had heard my prayer and Nina's, and obtained peace for both.

With a lightened heart I resumed my wonted avocations, thinking the while of Kilorgan, and its ancient door with the armorial bearings of the Plunkets and Fitzgeralds on the shield above, and the group that stood on the steps below waving their parting salute, and wishing me health and happiness. Then the evenings by the fireside in that dear old room, half hall, half parlor, the firelight within and the moonlight without, and the tales Uncle Maurice told, and the songs that Margaret sung,—and the gentle voice of Aunt Ella breaking, at times, like low, sad music on the ear,—and her face, like that of a Grecian statue in its sad yet sweet repose. And Margaret—why did my heart beat faster,—why did the tide of life course more freely through my veins as I thought of *her*? In her grey cloak and rustic bonnet she stood before me, as on that first day I saw her, but how different now was the picture of her remembered face

and form! As I thought of her devotion to her uncle and aunt, I smiled at a pleasant conceit that came into my mind, one, however, that I do not care to mention now. I asked myself—"What will my cousin think of the young heiress of Kilorgan?" And with perfect consciousness of what he was likely to think of her, I laughed at the idea.

Mr. Fitzgerald's commission I faithfully executed, and found no difficulty in arranging matters in a way that I knew would be satisfactory to him.

Although I had nominally embraced the legal profession, it was more from the desire of having something to occupy my time and attention than from any necessity I was under of doing so, and I was not sufficiently enamored of its dry drudgery to make it an object of eager pursuit. I was fond of country life, and would never, from choice, live in a city. In the quiet of the country, and face to face with nature, I felt happier, and breathed, as it were, the breath of freedom. It was always my intention to give up the law after a few years, and retire to my paternal mansion, beneath the shade of whose venerable oaks I hoped to find rest and peace. But my dreams of future enjoyment were not all selfish. I had the welfare of my tenantry much at heart, and proposed making many improvements on my property that would exert a beneficial influence on them. Gradually the image of Margaret Fitzgerald became associated in my mind with these Utopian dreams, and I resolved to return to Kilorgan in the Spring

and, now that I was free, make an effort, at least, to win her heart and hand. How long the intervening time appeared,—yet it was pleasant to think that every passing day brought me nearer that on which I should see *her* face again, and hear her voice, and sit again by her hospitable hearth.

It is scarcely necessary to say that I kept up a regular and frequent correspondence with Mr. Fitzgerald, and through him I, of course, heard all that it concerned me to know. His niece I never mentioned in my letters except by way of kind remembrance. I was often amused when writing the usual formula, "Kind regards to the ladies," or, "Please to remember me to your sister and your niece;" the words looked so cold and passionless on the paper and so little expressed what was in my heart.

On the feast of the Purification, the second day of February, Nina Ellersley left the home of her childhood for the home of her heart,

"In those deep solitudes and awful cells
Where heavenly, pensive contemplation dwells."

She had chosen a poor community to whom her large fortune would be a special advantage. All our family were present at her reception, and I was truly rejoiced to see that no shade of sadness dimmed the brightness which had of late replaced the old languor and dejection of her fair face. Her heart had found rest and peace, even that peace which is not of this world, and surpasses all understanding. When we took leave of her that day, how radiant was the smile

with which she held out her hand to me, and wished that I might be as happy in my vocation as she was in hers.

* * * * *

The flowers of May were in their early bloom when I stood on Thomond Bridge in Limerick, looking down on the noble Shannon, that king of island rivers as it has been happily called. I had to wait some twenty minutes for the steamer, and I took the opportunity to have a look at that picturesque old bridge, with the adjoining castle dating from the time of King John and bearing his name. Before and around me lay the once Danish city, later the city of the O'Briens, and beyond most others in Ireland, rich in historic memories. Even my limited acquaintance with Irish history enabled me to look with interest on the scene before me. The Shannon was broad and bright and deep, and the towers and spires, and quays and bridges, and mouldering walls of the ancient city made a quaint and pleasant picture, reminding one somewhat of an old Flemish town. The vast plain that stretched around was luxuriant in the greenness of the vernal time, and the hills of Clare and Tipperary rose like the ancient Titans to the sky robed in their many-colored garb of shade and sunshine, and wood and pasture, and moorland wild. Many a sweet and pleasant thought came into my mind as I stood on the old historic bridge looking down on that river of memories. But pleasant as these musings were, more pleasant still to me was

the shrill whistle from the boat announcing its approaching departure.

Half an hour in the steamer, on the Shannon, and an hour's ride in a post-chaise, brought me to Kilorgan, and just as the sun began to sink behind the mountains I sprang from the chaise at the old familiar gate, and telling the driver to await my return there, went up to the house alone.

When I knocked at the door it was opened by Sheelah, whose scream of glad surprise might have awoken the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus had they been anywhere near. I made a sign to her, however, to keep quiet, and asked where the family were.

"They're abroad in the garden, your honor, and maybe they won't be glad to see you! dear knows but I'm glad myself!"

Waiting for no more, I took the well-known path to the garden, and pausing a moment at the gate, which was set in an arch of a high brick wall, I glanced along the broad shady walks to see where those I sought could be found. I saw Mr. Fitzgerald, with his sister leaning on his arm, walking at the farther end of the garden, while just inside the gate, Margaret was engaged tying up the redundant branches of a laburnum tree. Her back was turned toward me. The gate was open and I approached her so stealthily that the first intimation she had of my presence was my asking—"Can I assist you, Miss Fitzgerald?"

She started, turned quickly round, and with a look

half pleased, half puzzled, said : "Mr. Howard ! can this be you ?"

"If it be not, I know not who it is," I replied laughing—

" ' But if this be I, as I suppose it be, '

are you, or are you not, glad to see me ?" And I took her two hands, and sought to read in her eyes what her words might not tell.

"Glad ! why, of course, I'm glad !" she said in her frank, off-handed way, without the slightest embarrassment ; "but I am surprised, too, for you were one of the last I should have expected to see. But you cannot think how glad my uncle and aunt will be to see you."

And so they were ; what Margaret's welcome wanted in cordiality theirs amply supplied. And for me, what joy it was to see them all again ! Even the easy indifference of Margaret had in it something *piquant*, something that incited me on to try my fate with one whom I now felt was more than all the world to me.

The chaise was dismissed, after taking my luggage to the house, and never shall I forget the joy that filled my soul when I found myself again quietly seated at the little tea-table, *en quartette*, with the beautiful twilight of the lengthening day filling the room with its mild, gray light, and Margaret's face, on which my eyes so loved to gaze, borrowing a more tender grace from the gathering shades. It was almost pain to speak, in the fullness of my de-

light, and, except Margaret's voice, I wished to hear no sound breaking the stillness of the charmed hour. It is probable that all felt alike, for the meal passed in almost total silence. No lights were introduced, for none were wanting.

As we left the table Margaret said—"Mr. Howard, you have come with the May flowers—and see," pointing through the open door of the hall to the sky where the crescent moon was visible in her virgin beauty—"Yonder 'the young May moon is beaming'—the first time I have seen her." And she began humming the gay and graceful air of that favorite song.

We went out and sat for a little while on a bench outside the door. We talked of Moore, the poet of the moonlight of Lalla Rook and "Oman's Sea," and,

"Of her who lies sleeping among the pearl islands
With nought but the sea-star to light up her tomb."

I told her how much I had enjoyed the little while I spent that day in Limerick.

"Ah, yes!" said Margaret, "'Limerick of the ships' is a fine old city. Standing where you stood, Mr. Howard, an Irish heart would thrill with the stirring memories of the old heroic past. Were I there I would think of how Hugh O'Neil, the nephew of the great Hugh, and the hero of Clonmel, defended Limerick against the iron soldiers of Ireton and Cromwell, and would have defended it successfully, as he did Clonmel, but for treachery and internal dissension; I would think of the heroic Bishop of

Emly, who, when captured by the psalm-singing butchers, and offered his liberty if he would advise the garrison to surrender, brought within their hearing for that purpose, on the contrary exhorted them as Irishmen and as Catholics, to hold out to the last, and die fighting for faith and country,—and in punishment of his so-called treason, was hung in sight of his horror-stricken friends and co-religionists in the doomed city. Even you, Mr. Howard, English as you are, must have thought of Patrick Sarsfield and the men—and women—of Limerick, how bravely and successfully they held out against the Dutch general of William of Orange after the Battle of the Boyne. That was the time

“ ‘When Ginckle leaguer’d Limerick’ and ‘Irish soldiers gazed,
To see, if in the setting sun, dead Desmond’s banner blazed!’ ”

“Yes,” I replied, “I thought of that memorable siege, and I thought, too, while looking at the tower of the old cathedral, of the Italian bell-founder, the old ‘Campanaro,’ whose touching story has been consigned to immortal fame by McCarthy’s exquisite poem.*

“Ah! you thought of that, did you?”

“How could I but think of it with the belfry tower in sight where Paolo’s beloved bell pealed out over the Shannon his knell and dirge?”†

* “The Bell-Founder.” *Irish Legends and Lyrics*. By D. F. McCarthy.

† Supposing our readers to be already acquainted with the beautiful story of the Italian bell-founder, who died of joy on hearing his bells in St. Mary’s Church, in Limerick, we shall merely refer those who are not to the poem already mentioned.

"And you thought, doubtless, of the beautiful description of the surrounding scenery, in 'The Bell-Founder,' while you stood on old Thomond Bridge:

"'Twas an evening that Florence might envy, so rich was the
 lemon-hued air,
 As it lay on lone Scatter's island, or lit the green mountains of
 Clare ;
 The wide-spreading old giant river roll'd his waters as smooth and
 as still,
 As if Oonagh, with all her bright nymphs, had come down from
 the far fairy hill,
 To fling her enchantments around on the mountains, the air, and
 the tide,
 And to soothe the worn heart of the old man who look'd from the
 dark vessels side.' "

"I remember having seen a very elegant sonnet of Sir Aubrey De Vere's on the Shannon," I observed.

"And Gerald Griffin's sweet ballad," said Aunt Ella,—“do you know it, Mr. Howard?”

I replied in the negative.

"I will sing it for you this evening," said Margaret.

"And why not now?"

"As you will. But as I am no Troubadour 'hastening home from the war,' I do not care to 'touch my guitar' out of doors to-night, and you must e'en dispense with accompaniment. Now this particular song of Griffin's was written, Mr. Howard, at the request of a beloved sister in America, who asked the poet to write her a song to her favorite air—'Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch.' Then she sang in her own graceful way:

- “ Know ye not that lovely river?
 Know ye not that smiling river?
 Whose gentle flood,
 By cliff and wood,
 With wild’ring sound goes winding ever.
 Oh! often yet with feeling strong
 On that dear stream my mem’ry ponders,
 And still I prize its murmuring song,
 For by my childhood’s home it wanders.
 Know ye not, &c.
- “ There’s music in each wind that flows
 Within our native woodland breathing;
 There’s beauty in each flower that blows
 Around our native woodland wreathing.
 The memory of the brightest joys
 In childhood’s happy morn that found us,
 Is dearer than the richest toys
 The present vainly sheds around us.
 Know ye not, &c.
- “ Oh, sister! when ’mid doubts and fears,
 That haunt life’s onward journey ever
 I turn to those departed years,
 And that beloved and lonely river;
 With sinking mind and bosom riven,
 And heart with lonely anguish aching;
 It needs my long-taught hope in Heaven,
 To keep this weary heart from breaking!
 Know ye not, &c.”

I fancied that the singer’s voice faltered in the last lines. The pale moon was shining directly in her face, and I saw a tear trembling on her eyelids; I noticed, too, for the first time, that her face was paler and thinner than when I left, and I sadly felt that her heart, too, was the prey of “lonely anguish.” Was it the thoughts of leaving *her* “childhood’s

home," and going forth homeless on the world with those near and dear to her, that was preying on her secret heart?

Probably guessing my thoughts, the proud girl all at once shook off her dejection, and said in her usual manner—

"By the way, Mr. Howard, why did you come now? and when are we to expect your cousin?"

"Why, Margaret," said her aunt, "how inquisitive you are growing!"

"I fear I am, Aunt Ella!" and she tried to laugh, "but Mr. Howard will, I hope, excuse me. We ought to know when the owner of Kilorgan is coming."

"And why *I* came?" I said pointedly. "My cousin will, I think, pay Kilorgan a visit in the course of a week or two. As for *my* coming, just now, I can account for it in no other way than by candidly confessing that I wanted to spend a few more quiet days amongst you here before my cousin comes,—and to hear some more of those old Geraldine legends. Does that explanation satisfy you, my fair cross-examiner?"

She shook her head and smiled,—and her smile had grown sadder, too, I thought,—but she said no more, and we soon after went into the house.

That was one of the happiest evenings of my life when I found myself again within the charmed circle of which I had, in absence, so often dreamed. Dear as the green oasis and the sparkling fount to the weary traveller in the desert was that hour to me!

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER breakfast next morning Mr. Fitzgerald proposed a walk. "I wish to show you, Mr. Howard! so that you may inform your cousin, what I have been doing this spring on the property. I think he will find on coming here that I have had everything done to the best advantage; none the less so, I assure you," he added with a faint smile, "that we Fitzgeralds are now but tenants at will in Kilorgan."

"Really, Mr. Fitzgerald, I am not much of an agriculturalist, and am, therefore, a poor judge of farming operations. Moreover, not being a party interested, I feel no desire to inspect your tillage or pasture-land. I would rather visit Miss Margaret's mountain solitude. Can you join us, ladies, in case we go there?"

Aunt Ella declared herself willing, but Margaret had not time, she said, having to assist Sheelah in some culinary affairs. There was nothing for it but to go without her, and we went accordingly. But we did not "make the ascent," as travellers would say of Mont Blanc or the Jungfrau; Mr. Fitzgerald feared his strength was not equal to it, and since Margaret was not of the party, all places were alike to me. The beauty of spring was everywhere, its warblings filled the air, its breath fanned the tender

foliage, and its sunshine made all things gay and bright.

As we strolled leisurely along, Miss Fitzgerald leaning on my arm, I asked Uncle Maurice who that namesake of his was who was killed in Flanders. "I observed you called him the Knight of Kerry. I have heard of the title before, but I did not know that the Knights of Kerry were Fitzgeralds."

"Yes, that is one branch of the old Geraldine stock, and it was for ages an important branch, too. One of the first Earls of Desmond had two sons, whom he knighted while they were still very young, and to each of them he gave a certain tract of country, from which they were respectively named the Knight of Glyn and the Knight of Kerry. Another of the same line received, probably from the color of his armor, the title of the White Knight, and his descendants took the name of Fitzgibbon, in order to distinguish them from the other branches of the same stock. These titles were made hereditary, and some of them continue till the present time. Some other time I may tell you more about these minor branches of the Geraldine tree. But where was that we left off our narrative the night before your departure? I believe we had almost ended with the Leinster Geraldines."

"Yes, Maurice," said Miss Fitzgerald, "you had got as far as young Gerald, the half-brother of Silken Thomas. You were to tell Mr. Howard something of his romantic and eventful history."

"Well! then, as it would be too long to tell in one evening, suppose we rest a while on this bench, and I will make a beginning now."

We seated ourselves accordingly in the shade of a spreading elm, and Mr. Fitzgerald commenced his story.

"You may remember my telling you, Mr. Howard, that the boy Gerald was the only one of his father's younger children left in Ireland when his parents went to London, and that he was ill at the time of small-pox, under the care of his tutor, Father Leverous. Well! when the news of the execution of his brother and his five uncles reached Ireland the whole country was thrown into consternation, and the voice of lamentation was heard not only in Leinster, but throughout Ireland. The whole race of the Geraldines seemed doomed to destruction, for arrests were being everywhere made of gentlemen bearing their name; even priests were dragged from their flocks and immured in prison for no other reason but that of being Fitz Gerald's and adherents of the fallen house. It became necessary, then, to remove the child-heir of Kildare to a place of greater safety. Accordingly Father Leverous had him conveyed, ill as he was, to his sister, Lady Mary, the wife of O'Connor Faly, in the district of Offaly. There the little Lord Gerald,—not Earl of Kildare, as he should have been, because of his father's attainder,—tended and watched with loving and almost reverential care, soon recovered his health, and even his good looks.

' But just when his sister was felicitating herself on the boy's recovery, and learning, day by day, to love him with more devoted affection, on account of his gentle, loving nature, it was found necessary that she should resign him to other hands. Father Leverous took him farther into the Irish country, first to O'Dunn's country, then, after a few months, to Thomond to his father's faithful friend, O'Brien, to whose care the earl had committed the greater part of his household plate, and even his family jewels, previous to his fatal departure for England. There in addition to Father Leverous, Gerald was placed under the care of his cousin, James Delahide, who was his faithful guardian and companion from that time forward through the troubled years of his stormy youth.

"After a six months' stay in hospitable Thomond, Gerald was conducted by his two faithful friends to his aunt, Lady Eleanor McCarthy, widow of one McCarthy Reagh, and mother of another. Now McCarthy being little more than a youth, and a tributary of the Earl of Desmond, the Government proposed to the latter to persuade McCarthy to give up his young cousin. But Desmond had as little idea of persuading McCarthy to any such thing as McCarthy had of being persuaded. The gallant young chief gave his boy-cousin a frank and hearty welcome, and under the hospitable roof of Kilbriton Castle, then one of the McCarthy strongholds in the County Cork, Gerald remained under the maternal care of his noble

aunt, a lady every way worthy of the name she bore, whether as a Fitzgerald or a McCarthy. And Desmond, politic earl as he was, devised a plan by which he hoped to keep the Kildare lands and castles from falling into the hands of strangers until such time as the attainder might be removed, and Lord Gerald succeed to the honors and possessions of his house. He asked and obtained a lease of 'Crom, Adare, and other of the late Earl of Kildare's lands in the county of Limerick, to pay the rents thereof to the king's officers.' Leased to the all-powerful Earl of Desmond, the Kildare possessions were thus placed beyond the reach even of the English king, although that king was Henry VIII. All England knew, and Ireland, too, that 'James of Desmond,' as the State papers of that day all style him, was not a man to be lightly dealt with, so when he thus openly took the orphan heir of Kildare and the princely inheritance that ought to be his into his own safe keeping, even the tyrant Henry Tudor was forced to agree to the arrangement. But how little they knew of the Geraldines, least of all those of Desmond, who coolly proposed to Earl James to cause his ally and tributary, McCarthy, to give up to English vengeance the fatherless son of his illustrious kinsman, Earl Gerald of Kildare!—Oh! Mr. Howard, it makes my old blood run warm again to think of these grand old Desmond Geraldines, the great palatines of the South, the protectors of all oppressed 'Irishry,' the enemies of English domination, the staunch and steadfast up-

holders of the ancient faith. My heart swells with pride when I think of what the Earls of Desmond were, how entirely they adopted the Irish ways, how fully they identified themselves with Irish interests, how fervent, how unshaken their devotion to the ancient faith, from which no one of them ever fell away. Then, again, my soul is heavy within me when I think that this glorious race has passed away, that Ireland and her faith have lost them, that 'the foe and the stranger' rules where once they ruled, and that they sleep forgotten amongst the ruins of the stately abbeys they so lavishly endowed. Of them especially did the poet sing that

" "——as torrents mould the earth

They channell'd deep old Ireland's heart by constancy and worth.'

For while a Geraldine ruled in Desmond the old race and the old faith never wanted a friend. The Kildare Geraldines were always more trusted by the Government, and more identified with English interests, and in the lapse of time, conformed to the new religion, but the Desmond line was ever of and with the old Irish, heart and soul Catholic, and, therefore, generally of the number of those Irish papists whom the English officials of that day in Ireland were wont to mention in their dispatches as 'execrable traitors.' Far in their fertile South they ruled with all but kingly sway, and the noblest of the old Milesian chiefs were proud to be their allies, even their tributaries. From this you may understand the significance of those other lines—

“ ‘When Ginckel leaguer’d Limerick the Irish soldiers gazed,
To see, if in the setting sun, dead Desmond’s banner blazed.’

“But when I get on this theme, Mr. Howard, I forget myself, and am apt to try the patience of my hearers, unless, indeed, they have, like myself, the blood of that grand old race in their veins.”

“And the Catholic faith, and love of Ireland in their hearts,” I said, catching a spark of the fire that burned so brightly in the old man’s generous heart. “Even I, English as I am by blood and birth, Mr. Fitzgerald, can fully enter into the enthusiasm with which you speak of those lion-hearted men of your own race.”

“But we have another motive for the love we bear the Desmond Geraldines,” said Miss Fitzgerald, “and that is the persecution they endured for faith and country, and the utter ruin that came down upon them because of their unselfish devotion. We love them, as Desdemona did Othello, for the dangers they had known, and also for the enormous sacrifices they made in carrying out their religious and patriotic principles.”

She rose as she spoke, and we sauntered back to the house, where Margaret’s smile was our sweetest welcome as she met us on the threshold with a wondering inquiry where we had been so long.

“I have been telling Mr. Howard a part of Lord Gerald’s story,” said her uncle, “while we sat down to rest.”

“Oh! I thought you had taken Mr. Howard to

see what ground you have under tillage this spring."

"Your uncle kindly proposed to take me," I replied laughing, "but having small judgment in those matters I begged to decline."

"A nice country gentleman *you* would make," said Margaret in the same tone. "you ought to live in cities all your life."

"Excuse me, *ma belle châtelaine*, I have no love for the city, and I have a great love for the country,—under certain conditions," I added.

"And the conditions—if it be a fair question?"

"The conditions I will tell you some other time when I am more in the humor of talking." This was heard only by Margaret's self, and I quite enjoyed her look of awakened curiosity. It was something to have her eyes meet mine even for a moment.

I saw no more of her till dinner, and after dinner she again disappeared till tea-time, when she gaily announced herself as "her own mistress" for the rest of the evening. When Sheelah came in to join in the Rosary that night, she was accompanied by a little hunchback boy, a sickly but intelligent looking child of some eight or ten years old, who responded to the prayers with so much recollection that I could not help noticing it.

"I see you have got an additional member in your household since I left," I remarked.

"Yes," said Margaret carelessly, and she evidently meant to say no more on the subject, but her uncle said with a peculiar smile: "That boy is the son of

a poor widow who was a *protégé* of our Marrgaet's. She died a few weeks since, and nothing would serve her wilful ladyship but she must take him home here. A rich idea surely, Mr. Howard, when we have, even now, no home we can call our own, but are living on suffrance under a stranger's roof!"

"A stranger's roof!" I involuntarily repeated, but recollecting that the present owner of Kilorgan was really a stranger to its inmates, I stopped short.

"But, my dear uncle," said Margaret, "what matter whose roof we are under; it can shelter poor Peter while it shelters us. And when God shall provide a home for us, He will provide one for him, too,—for is He not the father of the orphan?—But, Uncle Maurice," she went on, evidently desirous of changing the subject, "we are forgetting Gerald Fitzgerald. Where did you leave him this morning?"

"We left him at his Aunt Eleanor's in Kilbritton Castle,—did we not, Mr. Howard?"

"I believe that *was* where you last located his young lordship, under the joint protection of his cousin McCarthy, and the Earl of Desmond."

"Precisely. Well! it so happened that Manus O'Donnell, Chief of Tyrconnell, had been some time a suitor for the hand of the still youthful and attractive widow of McCarthy. Lady Eleanor, devoted to the memory of him who had been the lover and husband of her youth, had steadily refused his offers. Now, when there was question of obtaining another powerful friend for the precious child who had in so

tragical a way become head of their house, and of drawing yet another of the great chieftains of the country into the league which she, her son, and the Earl of Desmond, were projecting for the reinstatement of the house of Kildare in its honors and possessions, the noble lady resolved to sacrifice her own feelings and accept O'Donnell, who was unfortunately not a man to win the heart of such a woman as Eleanor Fitzgerald. And here I must remind you of what, I think, I told you before, that one of the sisters of that lady, the Lady Margaret Fitzgerald who had married Sir Pierce Butler, afterwards Earl of Desmond, was also a most remarkable woman; both sisters would have been considered so in any age, from their great strength of character, and that far-seeing sagacity, which made them fully equal to any even of the men of their time in the great art of governing and controlling others. Even the historic page speaks of Margaret Fitzgerald, Countess of Ormond, as one who exercised a powerful influence throughout the realm of Ireland. Her sister Eleanor, with as much intellect and as great force of character, was more Irish in her ways, and had more sympathy with the old race, probably because of her love-match with Donald McCarthy, early in life, whereas her sterner and statelier sister,—the *Mairgreud Dhu* (Black Margaret) of the Kilkenny peasantry,—married into the Butler family, ever anti-Irish and un-Irish in their thoughts and feelings, and in all their ways.

“As for Lady Eleanor McCarthy, she was a

thorough-going rebel, always in league with the Irishry,' and plotting against the English domination with her 'cousin of Desmond,' her cousin-germain, O'Neil, and other such 'pestiferous traitors' both of the old and new Irish. An ancient chronicler* says of Lady Eleanor Fitzgerald: 'This noble woman was always known and accounted of each man, that was acquainted with her conversation of life, for a paragon of liberality and kindness; in all her actions virtuous and godly; and also in a good quarrel rather stout and stiff.'

"But I am digressing. As I told you, Lady Eleanor consented to become the wife of the powerful toparch of Tyrconnell, the chief of the Clan Connell, and to that step none urged her more strongly than her son, whose devotion to his mother's illustrious house was equal to her own. Some gentlemen of his kindred were immediately sent by O'Donnell to escort the Lady Eleanor to Tyrconnell, and with a few of her own attendants, the lady of Clan Carty set forth on her journey, accompanied by her nephew Lord Gerald Fitzgerald, his tutor Father Leverous, and Father Richard Walsh, chaplain to the late Earl of Kildare, who had just returned from the continent whither he had been on a mission to the Emperor Charles V.

"It was no light undertaking in those disturbed times, when the country was a prey to so many conflicting parties, ruled by so many contending chiefs

* Stanistrait.

and nobles, and when the noble boy who accompanied her was the object of so much anxious fear, so many intrigues on the part of the Government, to journey with only a slight escort from one extremity of the island to the other,—from Cork to Donegal. Those were not the days of railroads or even stage coaches, and it was on horseback, if able, or if not, carried in a litter, by the strong arms of their gallovglasses, that even the most delicate ladies made the longest journeys. And that because roads were bad and hilly, and the country thickly interspersed, with bogs and woods, the old primeval woods. Well was it for those who made these long and tedious journeys that the olden hospitality was still practised by chiefs and people, and in the case of Lady Eleanor that she and her nephew had friendly castles to welcome them all along their route.

“First they proceeded to Thomond, or North Munster, where they were hospitably entertained by O’Brien, the devoted friend, as I have told you, of the late earl and of all his family. From North Munster the noble travellers journeyed to Galway, where they were met by the Lord Ulick de Burgh, afterwards Earl of Clanrickard, who conducted them to his castle; there they also remained some days for rest and refreshment, and on their departure were escorted by De Burgh himself to Sligo, where, in the friendly halls of his kinsman, McWilliam Burke, they rested a while; from there they proceeded over the mountains to Donegal, and on the confines of his ter-

ritory the chief of Clan Connell met his intended bride, and gave courteous welcome to her and her noble nephew. The marriage ceremony was performed with as little delay as possible, and then with sound of trumpet and heralds proclaiming her new dignity, the Lady of Tyrconnell was conducted in state to the grand old castle of the O'Donnells, at the head of Donegal Bay.*

"In that lordly dwelling, amid the wild grandeur of that rock-bound coast, with the broad bay stretching out in front to meet the neighboring ocean, the young heir of Kildare spent some quiet, happy months,—poor, hunted quarry that he was,—now prosecuting his studies under the watchful care of the two learned and pious ecclesiastics who shared his exile,—now joining the chase when the O'Donnell hunted the red deer of the country in the wilds of Tyrconnell,—now boating on the bay or fishing in some one of the many limpid streams that flow into its broad bosom from the mountains around. All this was pleasant, it is true, but most the noble youth prized the hours when he sat listening to his aunt's music as she struck the harp to the ancient glories of the Geraldines, or when she talked to him of his

* This journey from the South to the North of Ireland is remarkable as showing the sympathy of the Irish population and the want of information on the part of the Government, who, notwithstanding the anxiety of the king to obtain possession of Gerald, were only informed of his departure, and of the marriage of Lady Eleanor with O'Donnell, by common report, after both events had taken place. See *Earls of Kildare*. By the Marquis of Kildare.

dead father and brother, and his beautiful sister Elizabeth, the star of the English Court, and his little brother Edward, far away in England, and the fair widowed mother, who, though still living was, by a cruel fate, lost to him,—for how long, who might tell?

“Lady Eleanor never tired speaking of the gentle sister-in law who lived so faithfully devoted to the memory of the brother she had loved so fondly, and from her Gerald learned many of the touching details of her secluded life at Beaumanoir. You may well imagine, Mr. Howard, what an elevating and refining influence the society of his accomplished aunt exercised on Gerald’s youthful mind, naturally endowed with generous and noble aspirations. During the time, all too short, that he remained under her judicious care, his heart, as well as his intellect, was cultivated, and his religious and moral principles established on a firm basis.

“But this happiness could not last. Although O’Donnell loved his wife after his own rude fashion, and was probably proud of her superiority—the full extent of which he, perhaps, did not understand,—Lady Eleanor had been less than a year his wife, when, from certain mysterious signs that came under her observation, she began to fear that she had bartered her hand in vain; that the tempting offers of the English king and his Irish Government in regard to the young Gerald were working on the weak, sordid mind of O’Donnell; that Tyrconnell was no

longer a safe retreat for her orphan nephew. The thought was madness, and Eleanor O'Donnell was almost overcome by the crushing weight of misery and disappointment it brought with it. At first she did not dare to breathe to any one a suspicion so derogatory to her husband's honor; but with the passing days came more damning proof that her fears were not unfounded, and at length she could no longer doubt that Manus O'Donnell was actually in treaty with the king's officials in Dublin, and had agreed, on the payment of a certain sum of money, to disgrace his princely name, and sully the unspotted fame of his ancestors, by betraying his guest, his wife's nephew, and the head of the illustrious house of Kildare, into the hands of those who had reddened the scaffold with the blood of so many of his nearest kindred!—Then, in her deep affliction, when it became necessary that something should be done to avert the fate that seemed impending over Gerald, the lady took counsel of Fathers Walsh and Leverous, and with them arranged a plan for having Gerald privately sent to France. When this was happily accomplished,—Lady Eleanor having given her nephew a supply of gold for his immediate wants,—she sought the presence of her unworthy husband, and upbraiding him with his duplicity and meanness, told him that Lord Gerald Fitzgerald was no longer in his power, that she had sent him beyond seas, where his name and the misfortunes of his family would obtain for him that respect and protection which Tyr

onnell could not afford. 'And now, Manus O'Donnell,' said the still beautiful Eleanor, drawing herself up to her full majestic height, 'now, Manus O'Donnell, be it known to you that it was solely on account of my nephew, and in the hope of promoting his investiture with the titles and possessions of our house, also of securing for him a safe and honorable asylum, that I became your wife, contrary to the resolution I had made of never marrying again,—now that you have so foully betrayed my trust, I leave your house once and forever. The daughter of Garret More Fitzgerald, the widow of Donald McCarthy and the mother of his sons, cannot live as the wife of a traitor. Fare thee well!—I return to my son's country, and shake from my feet the dust of Tyrconnell.'—'Eleanor, you shall not go!' said O'Donnell.—'Shall I not?' she said with flashing eyes. 'Who will dare prevent me?' She swept from the room, grand and stately, leaving the disgraced toparch so utterly confounded that he made no effort to detain her. This treachery of O'Donnell's is the more remarkable, and also the more criminal, inasmuch as both he and O'Neil, the other great northern chieftain, who was Gerald's cousin, had, it was well known, entered into a league with the Earl of Desmond, O'Brien of Thomond, McCarthy Reagh and other powerful chieftains, to raise, if possible, the fallen fortunes of the house of Kildare. It is certain that a strong confederation existed at that time in Ireland for this purpose, under the leadership of the

Earl of Desmond, and that most of the great Irish chiefs and toparchs were heart and soul enlisted in the cause. The O'Byrnes and O'Tooles of Wicklow, and the Kavanaghs of Carlow, were amongst the confederates, also the Maguires and O'Cahans of the North, and the O'Rourkes of Leitrim. We read of Art Oge O'Toole sending Lord Gerald, by way of Christmas gift, 'a saffron shirt dressed with silk, and a mantle of English cloth fringed with silk, and certain money.'

"Lady Eleanor appears to have been the main-spring of this formidable league, for in a letter written to the English Court by an Irish official soon after her marriage with O'Donnell it was stated that—' by the pestiferous working of this O'Donnell's wife, the Earl of Kildare's sister, they, whose ancestors were ever at dissension, be made one, and their powers concurring have practised to allure to them many captains of Irishmen, which never before was towards any of them. Even Lord Leonard Grey, the then Lord Deputy of Ireland, being Gerald's maternal uncle (you remember I told you it was at his magnificent mansion of Beaumanoir in England that the widowed Countess of Kildare, Gerald's mother, had resided ever since the earl's death), was so strongly suspected of secretly promoting the plans of Desmond and Lady Eleanor O'Donnell that he was arraigned some time after, sent to England, and finally executed on Tower Hill for treason against the

King's majesty. Yet another victim to the English fear and dislike of the Geraldines!"

"Yet Lord Leonard Grey was the near relative of Henry the Eighth!" I observed.

"Of course he was,—you know I told you when Gerald's father took Lady Elizabeth Grey for his second wife that she was cousin-germain to the king; consequently, her young son Gerald, whom that brutal tyrant was so relentlessly persecuting, was his second cousin, and her brother Lord Leonard, whom he caused to be beheaded for endeavoring to befriend his nephew, was his own full cousin.

"How the hideous character of that royal Blue-beard deepens its shades as you contemplate it in its different relations!—from most of the great families of England and Ireland he levied a tax in blood."

"You forget, Mr. Howard, that you are speaking of the father of English Protestantism," said Uncle Maurice with a grave smile; "the main pillar of the Reformation could not have sat for such a portrait. Let us return, however, to our young Geraldine lord. The merchant vessel in which his aunt had engaged a passage for him and his party was commanded by a certain Allen Governor, and belonged to St. Malo. On arriving in that port he was courteously received by the governor of the place and the principal townsmen. Amongst those who welcomed the persecuted heir of Kildare most warmly to the French shore was one who afterwards attained great celebrity, and was even then known to fame; this

was Jacques Cartier, the French navigator, the discoverer of Canada he may be considered. Cartier was then in the flush of his first glory; he had made his first and second voyages to Canada, and was already high in favor at the French Court. With that genial kindness and frank courtesy which so won the hearts of the grave Indian chiefs at Stadacona and Hochelaga,—the aboriginal names of Quebec and Montreal,—Jacques Cartier did the honors of his native town to the young Irish lord, whose sad story was even then well known on the Continent."

"Talking of Jacques Cartier," said Margaret, "where was it I saw the other day a noble ballad on that good and great man by one of the best of our modern Irish poets, resident in America? It began in this way:

" ' In the seaport of Saint Malo 'twas a smiling morn in May,
When the Commodore Jacques Cartier to the westward sailed away;
In the crowded old Cathedral all the town were on their knees
For the safe return of kinsmen from the undiscover'd seas;
And every autumn blast that swept o'er pinnacle and pier
Fill'd manly hearts with sorrow and gentle hearts with fear.' " "

"I may remark, *en passant*," said her uncle, that Jacques Cartier, like Christopher Columbus, was a fervent Catholic and acted, as he did, under religious inspiration, everything he undertook was for the extension of Christ's kingdom on earth. However, it is merely as a pleasing incident in Lord Gerald's

* T. D. McGee. *Canadian Ballads*.

shequered career that I now mention his meeting with Jacques Cartier. During the month the young nobleman spent in St. Malo, the guest of M. De Chateaubriand, the Governor, we may imagine how acceptable a companion Cartier was to Lord Gerald Fitzgerald,—how eagerly he listened to his tales of the strange new countries he had explored in the distant North; of the red men, the Huron and the Iroquois and the Algonquin, and their huntings in the wild northern woods, and over the ice-bound rivers, of their death-chants and their war-songs, their wigwams and their villages; all this was new and strange to the young Irish lord, and he listened with charmed ear to the wondrous tales the bold mariner told of his adventures by land and sea in that New World which was yet a mystery to the Old."

"And now, Uncle Maurice," said Margaret, "that you have brought Gerald safe to the friendly territory of France, we may leave him under the powerful protection of Francis the First, and postpone the sequel till to-morrow evening. I see Aunt Ella looks as though she were more than half asleep. And you, Mr. Howard! you must be fatigued after your—what shall I call it—not journey, exactly?"

"Nor yet voyage. No, I am not the least fatigued. If it were a day's travelling in the Alps or Apennines one might feel the worse for it and need rest, but for such travelling as I have had to-day,—between railroad-cars and steamboat, and a very short drive in a snug carriage,—it was nothing to fatigue

even the least experienced traveller. But it is later than I thought, and your uncle must be tired talking."

"I should rather think," said the polite old gentleman, "that you would be tired listening."

"Good nights" being exchanged all round, we betook ourselves to our several apartments,—some of us to the world of dreams, that region where there is neither past nor present, time nor space.



CHAPTER XV.

NEXT morning I walked out early, determined to make the most of the few days I might have at Kilorgan. It was a lovely morning, a balmy Spring morning, when earth and air were redolent of sweetness, and clothed in the glory of the golden sunshine. The birds sang merrily in the trees, and at intervals the cuckoo's voice rang out clear and shrill, waking the slumbering echoes of the mountains. It was the beautiful time when Spring and Summer meet, and both lend their charm to the gladsome, smiling earth. How lovely that morning was the sweet, secluded glen, the picturesque old dwelling, with its mossy steps, its old time memories, and its cherished associations; the dwelling which had become, as I sensibly felt, while gazing on it,

"The dearest spot on earth to me."

Ay, dearer than the home of my childhood, dearer than all the world besides, the home of my weary heart. These thoughts were uppermost in my mind as I stood leaning against a tree in front of the house just as the sun's first rays illumined its arched windows. Oh! that my life could flow tranquilly on beneath that roof with the few who made my world—the one who was its star, its light, its life. But then came the saddening thought that Margaret Fits-

gerald might never share my home, that her path and mine might be far apart over the world's waste. What reason had I to hope that the proud, though portionless girl would ever consent to become my wife;—and wanting her, what had life to charm me? what was the beauty that covered the earth?

Sighing I turned away, and taking one of the paths that led up through the mountains, I soon came to

“A shady nook by the running brook,”

where the first object that met my eyes was the dwarfish little figure of Margaret's new *protégé* Peter, bending over the flower-bespangled sward. Surprised, I asked,

“Why, Peter, what are you doing up here so early in the morning?”

The child looked up without manifesting any surprise. “I'm pullin' posies, sir, for the young mistress. I heard her sayin' she likes May-flowers, so I thought I'd come up here and get her some before the sun dries them all up.”

“You appear to know the place well, my little fellow.”

“An' to be sure I do, your honor. I used to get posies here every day for the poor mother when she was sick.” The childish voice trembled, and I saw a tear trickling down the sallow cheek, but poor Peter went on with his self-imposed task as though no weight of woe pressed on his young heart.

“Let me assist you,” I said, stooping down to cull some delicate primroses that grew just there.

"But you mustn't take all the nice ones," said Peter, not over pleased, it would seem, at the proposal.

"But, Peter, I will give them all to you," I said. "You shall have all I pull for your young mistress."

This restored Peter's good humor, and we became the best of friends. What little things go to make up the sum of life's happiness! With what blithesome heart I chatted away with the little hunchback as together we plied our labor of love that bright May morning!

When we had gathered what I thought was sufficient to make quite a large *bouquet*, I proposed that we should sit down on the bank and tie our flowers with one of the rushes that grew there in profusion. But to this my companion demurred. "No, no, your honor, the young mistress likes the May-flowers just loose this way," shaking them up in his straw hat. I compromised with the self-willed little fellow for a handful of primroses and mountain daisies, of which I made a small *bouquet*. We then returned to the house, Peter telling me as we went, in quite a confidential way, certain stories of "the gentry" (meaning the fairies), who were supposed to have a special fancy for Kilorgan, which he said was "ever an' always a gentle place on account of it." "On account of what, Peter?" "Why, bekase *they* have a likin' for it," and the boy looked timidly around, as though expecting to see something he would not like to see.

"And who are *they*, Peter?"

"Why, *themselves*—"

"Themselves? and who may themselves be?" I asked, more and more amused by the child's manner.

"Ah! then, don't you know very well who I mane?" said little Peter somewhat testily. "Did'nt I tell you about 'the gentry' bein' in it,—the good people,—an' wherever *they* do be about a place that's a *gentle* place, bekase you see the luck is in it."

"Oh! now I understand you, Peter! the *fairies* live here, and they are supposed to bring good luck to the place."

"That's it, your honor, but don't talk of *them* that way,—maybe it's hear you they would."

Here I might pause to remark what then and after struck me as curious, the extreme reluctance wherewith the Irish peasantry speak of the *fairies*, as such: they will beat round and round the bush in the most amusing way rather than make use of the word *fairies*. They have a salutary fear of those diminutive beings, and seem to suppose that they are far too awful and mysterious to be lightly spoken of by the children of men.

As we approached the house, Peter uttered a joyful cry, and darted off at a faster pace than I thought possible for his little, stunted body. I was at no loss for the reason. Margaret was at the door training a young jessamine around the porch. Peter running up breathless, had just presented his flowers when I reached the spot. I heard Margaret say—"Why Peter, you must have been up early this morning.

What a quantity of flowers you have gathered." And Peter's response—"Oh! I didn't gather them all,—the gentleman helped me. See, he has some, too!"

Margaret turned quickly, and smiled as she bade me good morning. She took the flowers from Peter, said he was a good boy, and told him to go to the kitchen.

"So you are 'the gentleman,' Mr. Howard!" she said in her arch way.

"Yes, and as you have graciously accepted little Peter's offering, may I hope that you will not refuse mine? I know not how it is with you, but to me the early primrose, with its delicate tints and its faint sweet perfume has an ineffable and most peculiar charm. I think it is that its delicate beauty is associated with the memories of early childhood, and its perfume breathes of life's sweet spring."

She took the bouquet from my hand and laid it on the bench beside Peter's flowers. No special compliment to me!

"Then with you, too, happiness is of the past?" she said in a careless, half-abstracted way. "It is sadly significant of this world's dreariness that happiness is scarcely ever of the present—always of the 'long ago.'"

"Sometimes of the future?" I said, throwing myself on the bench near where she stood. She shook her head despondingly and in silence continued her graceful task.

"Do you expect nothing from this world?" I asked. "Do you look forward to nothing brighter than the present?"

"Not on this side the grave. I am happy in making others happy,—beyond that, what have I to look for here below?"

"Have you never dreamed of loving and being beloved?"

"No need to dream of it," she said with a smile which I fancied was a sad one, "I *love* and know I am *beloved* every hour of my life."

"But is there no empty niche in your heart where some image is one day to be enshrined? Is there no longing after some ideal,—no yearning for a fuller and more perfect sympathy?"

"As to the niche, I cannot say," she replied with provoking indifference, as she began to gather up the flowers in her tiny black apron, my unlucky *boquet*, I observed going in with the rest,—“I believe I have never taken the trouble of examining what is, or is not, in my heart. As for the longing and yearning you speak of—I tell you I look for nothing in the future—the present is as much as I can well attend to. But I have finished my task now, and you must excuse me if I leave you, Mr. Howard! The morning is always a busy time with me.”

"Before you go, Miss Fitzgerald, let me ask what you propose doing with those yellow flowers of which you have such a quantity there?"

"These," she said, lifting a handful of them, "these

children of the April sun and showers, I will throw them in a basket just as they are. If they were artistically arranged they would lose their charm for me. And do you know why !”

“Of course not.”

“Well ! it is because that as you see them now they are associated in my mind with cherished memories of other days, when, as a child, I used to roam the meadows on May-eve,—as we here call the last evening of April,—in search of these golden flowers to strew about the door. And loving eyes that are long since closed in death looked smiling on my infant sport. Ah ! I had a lightsome heart in those May-days long ago !”

She hurried away, leaving me to my own thoughts. I could not help seeing that Margaret was not so gay as she had been ; a heavy weight seemed resting on her heart, and, notwithstanding the efforts she made to preserve her cheerfulness, her dejection was painfully visible. “I had a lightsome heart in the May-days long ago !” What a mournful meaning was in those words !—What would I not have given to know whether Margaret had any other cause for sadness than the gloomy prospects of her family ! For myself, I had little reason to hope that I could influence her happiness ; I was no more to her than the bunch of primroses she had tossed so idly among Peter’s flowers. Never had she given me the smallest reason to flatter myself that she regarded me as other than a mere passing acquaintance. Yet,

strange to say, the less chance I seemed to have of winning her love, the more ardently I desired to make the attempt. I was still engaged in these reflections, "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy," when Mr. Fitzgerald, appearing at the open door, bade me a cheerful good-morrow.

After an exchange of salutations, we entered into conversation, and the time passed pleasantly away till Margaret's bright face at the door, and her smiling invitation, announced breakfast. We found Aunt Ella already seated at the table.

The morning meal over, Mr. Fitzgerald asked me to accompany him in a short walk on a matter of business, and, while he went to his room for a certain paper he wanted, I entered the parlor and sat down by a window. On the small table which occupied the recess of that particular window, was a basket containing the May flowers, their deep green leaves and yellow blossoms still wet with the morning dew. But I looked in vain for my little *bouquet*, it was no longer amongst them. She had probably thrown it away, in utter unconsciousness of the pain even so slight an incident gave to me.

The day passed much as usual, and when evening came with its soft moonlight and its dews and its voiceful silence, we four sat together in the old parlor. Miss Fitzgerald in her accustomed place near the fire which still burned in one of the fire-places,—Uncle Maurice and I at a window near, and Margaret on a low seat by her uncle, her arm rest

ing on his knee. The light of the candles which burned on the high old mantel-piece, came dim and faint to where we sat, but the moonlight streamed in around us, resting lovingly on the silver hair and noble head of the old man, and the sweet womanly face of Margaret with its look of soul and sense and feeling. As I gazed on her speaking features, I thought of Gerald Griffin's lines—

“ When the advancing march of Time,
 With cheering breath has rolled away
 The mists that dulled her morning prime,
 And Beauty steps into her day ;
 What gives those eyes that conquering play
 That aching bosoms long confess ?
 And lights those charms with quick'ning ray,
 That else had charmed and conquered less ?
 A sweet light unto loveliness,
 A meaning breathing o'er the whole,
 That else might charm, but could not bless,
 Win, but not fix—'tis soul ! 'tis soul ! ”

I was almost sorry when Mr. Fitzgerald's voice broke the charmed silence, though it was to resume the story of the young Lord Gerald, which had so interested me the previous evening.

“ I forgot to tell you,” said Mr. Fitzgerald, “ that the great confederation of the Irish chieftains of that day against Henry VIII. was as much, and perhaps more, owing to his introduction of a new religion, and his persecution of the old, as it was to the wrongs inflicted on the house of Kildare. There is no doubt that the primary object of the movement was a religious one, for we read that the Lord Dep-

uty and the Council of that day officially informed the King that 'the detestable traitors,' young Gerald, O'Neil, the Earl of Desmond, and other chieftains of the Irishry, continued to 'destroy the property of His Majesty's subjects, to subdue the whole land to the supremacy of the Pope, and to elevate the Geraldines. Thus you see, Mr. Howard, that the 'elevation of the Geraldines' and the 'supremacy of the Pope' were then closely identified in the minds of the Catholic Irish.

"But to return to my story. Immediately on Gerald's arrival in France, word was sent to the King, who kindly invited him to the court, and after a month spent with his friends in St. Malo, he set out for Paris with his two clerical friends, and his cousin Delahide. It was an honest Breton named Vincent Noblet who served as their guide, and some time after, when an English emissary endeavored to persuade Noblet to tell him where Gerald was, the Breton, true to the chivalrous character of his race, told him he would not betray the young lord for twenty thousand pounds, unless under promise of pardon, for that he loved him above all men, and wished the King of England only knew him as well as he did.

"By the noble-hearted Francis the First the young Geraldine was kindly and graciously received before all the brilliant court of France; and, sending for the Dauphin, his son, he commended the young Irish lord to his care and attention. And while Gerald re-

mained in France the gentle Prince was his kind and constant friend. One would suppose that now, at least, the persecuted heir of Kildare might rest secure; that even the despotic power of Henry the Eighth could not reach him in the shadow of the French throne, with such a monarch as Francis the First seated thereon. And it is probable that Francis would have been willing to protect him at all hazards, but there was a treaty existing between the French and English kings, that neither should harbor subjects of the other when called upon to deliver them up. No sooner, therefore, had Henry heard of Lord Gerald's being in France, than he ordered his Ambassador, Sir John Wallop, to demand that the boy—who, he said, was the brother of a noted traitor executed in London,—should be given up to him.

“Francis the First, unwilling to comply, evaded the demand by insisting on having a special commission for Gerald's arrest from the English king. Before the document had time to arrive, Gerald was privately sent by the Dauphin to Valenciennes in Flanders, then under the dominion of the great Emperor, Charles the Fifth. Foiled again, the English Ambassador sent one of his attendants to Valenciennes to watch Gerald's movements. But the presence of this spy did not escape the watchful eyes of Father Leverous, who immediately informed the Spanish Governor. The latter sent for Sherlock, the spy, and finding that he could give no satisfactory account of himself, he threw him

into prison. Further to guard against the persevering malice of his enemies, the Governor sent Lord Gerald to the Emperor's court at Brussels.

"Charles the Fifth, no more friendly to the brutal English tyrant than his royal brother of France, and, like him, sympathizing deeply with the persecuted heir of so noble a house, gave Lord Gerald a cordial reception, and settled upon him a hundred crowns a month—a large sum then, little as it seems to us now.

"But the greater interest the Catholic princes took in Gerald, the more doggedly determined was Henry the Eighth to obtain possession of him. The Emperor, like the French King, was bound by the treaty before referred to, and Henry having formally demanded the surrender of the young Geraldine, there was nothing for it but to send him privately away. It was to the Bishop of Liege, then a sovereign prince, that Gerald was sent by the Emperor, and the good prince-bishop, bound by no treaties to the wife-killing Father of the Reformation, quietly placed the young Irish noble in a monastery in his magnificent city of Liege, where he carefully watched over him. There the youthful wanderer enjoyed a season of repose. In the hallowed shade of the cloister, protected by one who had both the power and the will to protect him, cheered by the paternal kindness of the prince-bishop, he could at least rest in peace, and like the wearied traveller in some Alpine region, gaze with thankful heart on the dangerous

ascent whereby he gained his place of safety. In Liege, Gerald remained six months.

"We next find him in Rome, whither he had been invited by his relative, Cardinal Pole, who received him with the greatest affection, settled an annuity upon him, and taking upon him the sole charge of his education, not only employed the best masters in the various arts and sciences, but placed him under the care, first of the Bishop of Verona, then the Cardinal of Mantua, and lastly, as a page at the court of Frederick III., Duke of Mantua, so that he might be trained in all the accomplishments befitting his high lineage and future rank. The Duke of Mantua added three hundred crowns a year to the pension he already received from Cardinal Pole. About this time Gerald's faithful guardian, Father Leverous was admitted, through the interest of Cardinal Pole, to the English monastery in Rome, called St. Thomas' Hospital, where he found a safe and honorable asylum for his declining years.

"When Gerald had attained the age of eighteen Cardinal Pole gave him his choice, whether he would continue his studies or travel to foreign courts, in order to obtain a knowledge of the world. He eagerly accepted the latter proposal and furnished with letters of introduction, repaired first to Naples. There it was his fortune to fall in with some of the Knights of Malta, to whom he was much attracted as two of his uncles had belonged to their illustrious Order. From these stout soldiers of the Cross he

caught the flame of martial enterprise, and longed to strike a blow for Christendom. It was at the time when the brave Knights of St. John were defending Tripoli against the Moors and Turks. Gerald accompanied his new friends to Malta, and soon after sailed for Tripoli, where he served for six weeks under the gallant Montbrison, then Governor of the City. It was a stirring time, a time of conflict and of danger to the heroic defenders of Christendom, and Gerald had the honor of accompanying the Knights in several successful expeditions against rich towns on the Barbary coast, where dwelt those fierce corsairs who had so long spread terror and devastation on the southern coasts of Europe. Against these formidable enemies of the Christian name, the young Geraldine lord bravely distinguished himself, and fleshed his maiden sword to good purpose. When he returned to Malta it was with honorable distinction and considerable booty, the spoils of the conquered.

“Returning to Rome he was joyfully received by the Cardinal, who, proud of his well earned reputation, increased his pension and introduced him to the service of the famous Cosmo de Medici, Duke of Florence. The Duke appointed him Master of his Horse, with a pension of three hundred pounds a year to continue during his life, or at least till the recovery of his family possessions. He remained three years at the Court of Cosmo.

“It was during his stay in Florence that a singular accident befell Gerald. He was hunting one day

with the Pope's Nephew, when all at once, in the very heat of the chase, he disappeared from the eyes of his companions, and for some time no trace of him could be found. The greatest anxiety was felt concerning him, and the rest of the party sought him in all directions, but in vain. At length the loud barking of a dog guided Cardinal Farnese and the others to a particular spot, where they found Gerald's Irish wolf-dog 'Grifhound' standing at the edge of a deep pit, looking into which they saw the object of their search standing on the dead body of his gallant steed. Ropes were speedily procured, and Lord Gerald extricated from his disagreeable position. He explained the matter by stating that in the eagerness of the chase he had overlooked this pit or cavern which lay in his way, its mouth partly covered by brambles and brushwood, and with his horse he was precipitated into it. Luckily for my young hero, he caught hold of the tangled root of a bush midway in the descent, and thence managed to let himself drop till his feet touched the body of his horse, killed by the fall, and there he stood till discovered by his faithful dog, who had traced him to the edge of the pit."

"Truly that *was* a singular adventure," I said; "but Gerald's life seems to have been all singular and romantic."

"His early life undoubtedly was," said Margaret, "and not the least romantic part of it is still to be told. It is a true epic from beginning to end. Well uncle, are you tired?"

"No, my dear; and even if I were, it is scarcely worth dividing what remains to be told."

"Lord Gerald remained abroad till the news of Henry's death gladdened all Europe, especially the nations that had remained faithful to the old religion. The accession of the amiable and gentle Prince, Edward the Sixth, gave Gerald reason to hope that he might venture to return to the British Islands, and having induced his former tutor, Father Leverous, to accompany him, he went to London in company with some foreign ambassadors, sent to congratulate the young king on his accession. Fearful of making his presence known sooner than prudence might warrant, Gerald's first appearance at court was at a masquerade ball given by the young king, being one of the series of festivities meant to inaugurate his reign. At this ball, to which Gerald accompanied his beautiful sister, Lady Elizabeth Brown, his fine figure and graceful manners attracted general attention, masked as he was, and on one heart he made an impression which time could never erase. Amongst all the fair and noble damsels whose presence gave grace and beauty to the gorgeous pageant, there was one that attracted Gerald's attention because of her sweet, womanly grace, and the delicacy and refinement which her disguise could not conceal. Around this fair creature Gerald hovered all that evening, exchanging pleasant words with her when he might, and watching with strange joy the admiration she everywhere excited as she glided through the bril

hiant crowd. Later in the night, when each was permitted to see the other's features, the young nobleman's heart was quite won by the lovely face of the fair unknown. What was his delight when he learned that she was Mabel Brown, the step-daughter of his sister, and the flower of English maidens. To complete his joy, he received an intimation from his sister that Mabel was no less charmed with him than he was with her. The sequel is easily foreseen. This love at first sight was soon followed by a private marriage, with the full consent of the lady's father Sir Anthony Brown, who knew that he would have no difficulty in obtaining the King's pardon for his noble son-in-law. The event justified his expectations. Gerald was soon after received into the young king's favor, was knighted by him, and restored by letters patent to his Irish possessions. The title of Earl of Kildare he was not permitted to bear till some years after, when Queen Mary had succeeded her young brother on the English throne. By her it was that the house of Kildare was reinstated in its former splendor, and Gerald invested with the honors and title of his ancestors.

"And the sudden tide of prosperity continued to the end of his life," said Margaret, "yet with all the interest excited by his strangely-chequered career, and his fine natural character, there is one circumstance connected with his life which prevents us, at least, from feeling the same interest in him as we did or do in any of the other Geraldines. It is written

of him that he conformed to the Protestant religion in the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth, and was consequently the first Protestant Geraldine."

"Which circumstance," said her uncle, "may be partly accounted for by another fact recorded of him, viz: that in his will he made provision for no less than *seven natural children*, three sons and four daughters. Following the example of Henry VIII., and others of the so-called Reformers, he indulged his criminal passions to their full extent, and so it was that the gallant young soldier of the Cross, who had fought and conquered under the banner of St. John, in his later years apostatizes from the faith for which the glorious Knights of that Order had for ages done and suffered such wonderful things."

"So it was this Gerald," I said, "who first withdrew the house of Kildare from the ancient faith?"

"Precisely. But still it is not certain that the Kildare Geraldines were all Protestants after his time, for we read of one Earl of Kildare (I think George the fifteenth Earl) obtaining a dispensation from the Pope to marry his first cousin, Miss Nugent the daughter of Lord Delvin, and it is known that the widow of another of Gerald's successors bequeathing two of her manors to the Jesuits, which manors were, for that reason, confiscated to the Crown. Still it may be said that the house of Kildare was Protestant from the time of Gerald the eleventh earl."

So ended the story.

As the night was still young, we continued our

vigil sometime longer, talking of many things in the deep repose of the quiet starry hour. At her aunt's request Margaret took her guitar and sang. A quaint old ballad it was she sang—

“A lay of the olden time
Falling sad on the ear.”

Sweetly and soothingly it fell on my heart. As I listened all that was harsh and discordant faded from my memory, and life, for the moment, seemed one long and beautiful harmony. When the sweet sounds ceased we were all silent for a while, then, at my request, Margaret sang again. This time it was a sweet old French *cantique* she sang in praise of Mary the Ever Blessed. Then that simple hymn to St. Joseph, so dear to Catholic hearts, beginning

Sweet Spouse of Our Lady,
Dear Nurse of her Child,
Life's ways are full weary.
The desert is wild.
Black sands are around us,
No home can we see,
Sweet Spouse of Our Lady,
We lean upon thee!

“Mr. Howard!” said Margaret, when she had finished the hymn to the sweet familiar air of the Meeting of the Waters,—“You who were brought up a Protestant can scarcely understand the confiding love with which we Catholics look to the holy patriarch St. Joseph, or how sensibly we feel his protection. In our temporal affairs he seems to have a tender compassion on the trials and difficulties that

beset our path. Next to our dear Mother in heaven there is no Saint to whom I pray so devoutly as her holy spouse St. Joseph."

"You will make me as devout to him as you are yourself," I said half jest, half earnest. "I would fain feel the same fervor that you do in these matters."

"Oh! my devotion is from experience, as well as faith," she replied, as she rose from her seat. "It is little merit for me to love and trust those to whom I have confided all the troubles of my life—at least for years past. Neither Our Lady nor St. Joseph has ever failed me in my sore need—and they never will I firmly believe.—Well! good-night, Mr. Howard! and Uncle Maurice. Good-night, and 'happy be your dreams!'" I am almost ashamed to say that her aunt's mild voice I scarcely heard repeating the charmed words "good-night." Margaret's voice was all I heard, all I wished to hear.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE following day was Sunday ; we went to Mass, as usual, to a little country chapel some two or three miles off, amongst the mountains. Every Sunday regularly, just half an hour before the time appointed for Mass, a horse and jaunting car might be seen at the door of Kilorgan House waiting to take the family to church. Not that even that remained of the retinue and *cortège* of former times ; it was the kind, considerate act of an old friend of the family, a wealthy widow who would fain have placed a handsome *barouche* at the service of the Fitzgeralds of Kilorgan, but could only prevail on them to accept the use of the unpretending jaunting car which better suited their fallen fortunes. It was beautiful to see the profound respect with which the rich Mrs. Brereton's servant, in his handsome blue and scarlet livery, invariably treated the Kilorgan family, bowing to them, hat in hand, as though they had still carriages and liveried servants of their own. And the quiet dignity of the elder people as though they were still what once they had been, yet without the shadow of that arrogant presumption which belongs of right to the vulgar. And Margaret, how kindly, how graciously she greeted her friend's old servant, whom she had known from her early childhood, and

inquired for his wife and family, not even forgetting a son who had gone to America. "What a pity," I thought, "to see such people as these reduced to poverty, while the vulgar rich roll in the lap of luxury, intent only on displaying their wealth, and lordling it over those whom Providence has placed in a condition inferior to theirs!"

I would fain have taken the same side of the car with Margaret that particular Sunday morning, but her uncle quietly took possession of the seat beside her, as, indeed, he generally did on such occasions, and I was left to keep Miss Fitzgerald company. In this connection I cannot help remarking how very punctilious the Irish are in regard to young girls; in Ireland there is none of that license allowed them that there is in some other countries; while young or unmarried they are continually under the *surveillance* of their natural guardians, or others whom they can trust. The customs of the country are very precise in that respect, which may be one of the causes of the greater purity of morals at all times prevailing there, and the feminine modesty which distinguishes young women, even the gayest and merriest maidens.

The chapel to which we went—the same where I had been every Sunday while at Kilorgan,—was not the parish chapel, but what is called a "chapel of ease." It was sufficiently bare and void of ornament; its floor was of clay, its walls simply white-washed, and its windows as plain as those of any

farmer's house in the vicinity; the music had little to recommend it, being executed by a voluntary rustic choir, and the priest was one of those simple, good old men who are truly part and parcel of the people to whom they minister, but I must say that never since I had been a Catholic did I feel more devotion assisting at the Holy Sacrifice than I did in that little mountain-chapel. The main building being too small to accommodate all the congregation, a gallery had been erected at one end, and on it the Kilorgan family and a few others had had pews made for themselves. From this height, therefore, I was wont to look down on the kneeling crowd below, and nothing could be more edifying to me than their general air of piety and recollection, as they bowed with one heart before the veiled Majesty of the Perpetual Victim, or stood, patiently and quietly, (seats there were none) to hear the eternal truths proclaimed in the familiar accents and homely phrase of their beloved pastor. The scene impressed me then, and I have never since forgotten it, although the good old priest has been long years slumbering in the narrow house appointed for all living; one younger and more polished has taken his place at that altar, and the little mountain-chapel itself has, for reasons hereafter to be explained undergone so many improvements that I would hardly know it myself.

When we returned home that day, the early dinner of the house awaited us, and all the long and lovely afternoon we spent in Margaret's mountain solitude

We had taken some books with us—one, I remember was Young's "Night Thoughts," another, a translation of Dante's *Divina Comedia*,—and reading now now conversing on what we read, and on subjects growing therefrom, we whiled away the long, bright summer hours. At length, when the declining sun warned us that evening was at hand, we reluctantly quitted the fairy scene over which the first gray tints of the twilight were just beginning to steal. Just as we were about to commence the descent, it so happened that Margaret and I stood together for a few moments; we had both turned to take a last look at the scene of quiet, lonely beauty we were about leaving.

"How often I have thought of this solitude of yours, Miss Fitzgerald," I said, half unconsciously, "when I was far, far away."

"Indeed," she said, in her arch way, "I am agreeably surprised to hear that you thought anything here worth remembering in your favored and prosperous England."

"Anything here!" I said in a tone so earnest that the young lady looked up in some surprise. "Did you think I could ever forget Kilorgan?"

"Certainly I did," she replied with provoking calmness, "I knew of no special claims it had on your remembrance."

"Miss Fitzgerald," I said in a low voice, as we followed her uncle and aunt, "I have heard many stories

since I have been here, I have told none yet. Will you allow me to tell you one this evening?"

"Of course I will, Mr. Howard!—nothing will give us more pleasure. And assuredly you owe my uncle one story at least."

"But I do not mean to pay him in kind, for I fear I am not much gifted with the *art de raconter*. The story I purpose telling is for you, and for you alone."

"Dear me! I should like to know what kind of story it is," said Margaret, with a smile, frank and open as her heart. "Some tale of mystery, I suppose, such as you think girls love to hear."

"No, it is a mere 'simple story.' A tale of real life, as the novelists would say."

"Well! whatever it is, I shall expect to hear it this evening."

We were just entering on the steep winding path leading down to the valley, so I hastened to offer my arm to Aunt Ella, leaving Margaret to follow with her uncle.

When tea was over, Miss Fitzgerald requested that the prayers should be said as soon as possible, as she felt fatigued and wished to retire early. She did accordingly, and as Margaret was always her aunt's tire woman, she was not at liberty to join her uncle and myself for some time; we, therefore, sat chatting in the parlor till the drowsy quiet of the hour, and, perhaps, some degree of fatigue, overcame the old gentleman, and he fell fast asleep in his high-backed chair.

So I sat alone in the soft summer twilight, looking at the fair orb of night as she slowly rose over the highest mountain top. I was thinking of one who had become in a few short months to my life, what that radiant star was to the evening firmament, and wondering whether I should ever have the happiness of calling her mine. All at once I heard the door open, then the bounding step that I knew so well, and Margaret was beside me. She was about to speak, but glancing at her uncle and seeing him asleep, she went on tip-toe and lit the candles, then came and sat down on the cushioned seat in the recess of a window not far from where I sat. I took a chair near her.

"The fates are propitious," I said in a subdued voice. "I told you my story was for you alone. Have I your permission to tell it now?"

She bowed and I proceeded. The story I told her, gentle reader, was that which I have already told you, the story of Nina Ellersley, beginning with my return home after leaving Kilorgan. I saw that she was much interested while I spoke of my aunt and sisters, and my meeting with them; when I came to speak of Nina I could not so well see her face; she had changed her position so that the light no longer fell upon it. Not a word escaped her lips while I told of all that followed, ending with Nina's reception into the convent, the few weeks I spent so wearily in London, and my return to Ireland.

When I ended we were both silent for several mo

ments, then I asked, in the same low tone in which I had spoken all through—

“And now, Miss Fitzgerald, what think you of my story?”

“What story?” said Uncle Maurice, waking up with a start.

“Oh! a story about his own family, uncle,” said Margaret, quickly, “that Mr. Howard has been telling me while waiting for you to finish your nap. He told me about his two sisters and his aunt, and their old ancestral house in England, and his meeting with all ‘the loved ones at home,’ after his return from here.”

“I am sorry I missed it,” said Uncle Maurice, “have I been long asleep?”

“About half an hour,” said Margaret. How I wished it had been at least some minutes longer! With all the pleasure I took in Mr. Fitzgerald’s company, it was provoking enough to have him wake up at the very moment he did, when my hopes of happiness depended on a word, a look, it might be! However, there was nothing for it then but to submit with the best grace I could, so I reminded Uncle Maurice that I expected a story from him, now that he had refreshed himself after the afternoon’s fatigue.

“Certainly I will tell you a story,” said the kind old gentleman, “and it shall be a story of the last struggles of the Desmond Geraldines for faith and country.” He paused a little while, then resumed as follows.

"When that James of Desmond died whom I mentioned to you as the faithful friend and protector of Gerald of Kildare in his orphaned state, he left three sons, Garrett (or Gerald), James, and John. Garrett, of course, became Earl of Desmond, in an evil hour for himself.

"The old feud between the Butlers and the Desmonds raged with unabated fury, and Queen Elizabeth, who then reigned in England, having no love for the sturdy Catholic Geraldines, and being well disposed to favor the now Protestant Butlers, commanded Black Thomas Butler of Ormond, when he had taken Gerald of Desmond prisoner at the battle of Affane, to send him, after his wounds were healed, to London, where for seven long years he lay pining in the dismal prison in the Tower, which had already proved fatal to so many of his race.

"I should have told you that when the late earl died, he left an elder son named Thomas Rua, or the Red, who, although the son of a noble lady, the daughter of Viscount Roche, was, strangely enough, considered illegitimate, the story going that the earl had not been lawfully married to his mother. It is certain that he was set aside from the succession, and the earl's three sons by another wife, regarded as the only legitimate heirs. Now when the eldest of these three, the young earl, was sent a prisoner to London, Red Thomas thought it a good opportunity to assert his claims to the earldom, and in this he was favored by the Queen and Ormond. The earl's two brothers,

disheartened at their brother's capture, and fearful, perhaps, of increasing his danger, were at first afraid to make any opposition to the high-handed measures of Red Thomas; but there was a Geraldine bolder than they, whom neither fear nor even calculating prudence could deter from maintaining the rights of him whom he considered the lawful possessor of the titles and domains of Desmond. This was James Fitz Maurice Fitzgerald, the cousingermain of the earl, and, to my thinking, the greatest, truest, best of all the Geraldines,—the one who 'of all that honored race' deserves the first place in the heart of Catholic Ireland:

"James Fitz Maurice knew not how to temporize; bold and brave, and high-souled and generous, he saw things with the eye of a Christian and a patriot as well as a devoted friend of his noble cousin, and he was determined to do what man could to restore the earl to his people, not only for his own sake and the glory of their house, but to restore to the old religion, already proscribed and persecuted, one of its main pillars in Ireland. He no sooner unfurled the red cross banner of Desmond than thousands flocked around it, whereas the usurper Thomas could with difficulty muster even a small force. Everywhere that James Fitz Maurice gave battle to the enemy aided as he was by Ormond and the English, victory was sure to crown his heroic efforts. Under his able leadership, Lord James and Lord John Fitzgerald, the earl's brothers, fought gallantly, and around them

rallied the strength of the Geraldines. And God blessed their efforts with such splendid success, that they were likely to conquer all Munster, if not more, and the politic Elizabeth, in order to conciliate such formidable opponents, liberated the earl from prison, and even made him a certain indemnity for the losses he had sustained. Before he left London she gave him an audience, on which occasion she exhorted her 'cousin of Desmond,' never to forget her great clemency to him, expressed her hope that he would henceforth demean himself as a good and loyal subject, and promote law and order (meaning, of course, English law) within the Desmond country. Furthermore that he would endeavor to bring his people to a better way of thinking in regard to religion, and in all things comport himself as became the liege subject of her Tudor Majesty. Earl Desmond bowed his haughty head, whether in acquiescence or dissent it was not easy to say, but Elizabeth chose to take it in the former sense, and they parted, to all appearance, good friends.

"So Desmond returned to his home and kindred, amid the enthusiastic plaudits of the loyal vassals who had so bravely maintained his rights when he was a captive in the land of the stranger. But of all who welcomed him back to the princely dwellings of his fathers, the gladdest and proudest were James Fitz Maurice, and the two young brothers of the earl. And to them his heart turned with the passionate love of the Geraldine nature, well knowing what they

had done for him, and that to them,—especially to his cousin,—he stood indebted for his freedom, and his restoration to the family honors.

“There were great rejoicings throughout the Desmond country, and, indeed, throughout all Ireland, when Earl Garrett was restored to his home and country. From Cape Clear to Fair Head many a bard struck his harp in the halls of the chiefs to the praise of the Desmond, and many a heart beat high at the thought of the great things he might do for the oppressed people of the land.

“For some time after his return, however, the earl was cautious not to embroil himself in the troubles of that stormy time. Some of the great northern chiefs were already in arms for the cause, and James Fitz Maurice was anxious to take part in this new movement, but Desmond, warned by experience, kept steadily aloof for so long a time that it was feared he had grown cool towards the national cause, and that little was to be expected of him.

“It was then a penal offence, as you well know, both in England and Ireland, to harbor Catholic priests, to assist at Catholic worship, or practise any of the ordinances of the ancient faith. Even the powerful Earl of Desmond did not at first dare to set this Draconian code at defiance; he kept his chaplain concealed in a remote part of his castle, and humbled himself so far as to practise his religion in secret.

“But this could not last. It was not in the nature

of a Geraldine to submit to worship God in secret, as though it were a crime to follow the faith of his fathers. News of the atrocious cruelties exercised on the Catholics, priests and people, came pouring in from all sides, and the hot blood of Earl Garrett began to boil with indignation.

"I promised the English Queen to be loyal and keep the peace," said he to his friend and counsellor, James Fitz Maurice, "but I never promised her to conceal my religion, or stand by and see people persecuted for professing the same. It shall never be said that Gerald of Desmond was afraid or ashamed to stand up for his faith. It would ill become the name I bear. So let the Sassenagh look to it."

"Great was the astonishment and indignation of the preachers of the new religion when the Earl of Desmond openly declared his adhesion to the ancient faith, and had all the ceremonies of religion carried out, as though there never were law or edict against it. Mass was openly said in the castle chapel, and, as of old, his chaplain accompanied him wherever he went. Divers threats were issued against the contumelious offender, and sundry notices served upon him to desist from these Popish practices, but Desmond only laughed at the threats, and to the notifications made answer that he was a Catholic, he thanked God, and meant to continue so. If it suited others to profess some new-fangled religion, it suited not him, and he cared not who knew it."

"And did Elizabeth allow him to continue such

conduct?" I asked. "Surely she was not the woman to permit even a Count Palatine to brave her anger with impunity."

"It was sorely against her will, you may well believe, that she allowed the Earl of Desmond to set her penal laws at defiance. But from the threatening aspect of the clans, North and South, she feared to provoke the Geraldines to rebellion, so she was fain to have recourse to treachery. She privately wrote to Sir Henry Sydney, then her Deputy in Ireland to concert some means for entrapping the Earl of Desmond. Sydney, an able and unscrupulous man, lost no time in obeying the orders of his royal mistress, which he carried out with good effect. He immediately invited all the nobility of Ireland to assemble in Dublin on a certain day to discuss some questions of great importance, chiefly in regard to religion. Amongst others, went Desmond and his brother Lord John, furnished with a safe conduct from Sydney. They had scarcely arrived in Dublin when they were seized and imprisoned in the Castle. From thence they were soon after sent to London to the Earl's old quarters in the Tower. There they were kept for five long, weary years, and none of their friends dared to hope that they would ever see Ireland again. Great was the sorrow of the oppressed Catholics everywhere; it seemed to them that they had lost their shield, their most powerful protector, when English treachery had once more

immured the Earl of Desmond in the dreadful Tower of London.

“Now the earl and his brother, being permitted to see each other at times, had many an anxious consultation as to what was going to become of their lands and castles in Ireland, and the dear ones who looked to them for protection. They knew that unless their people had some able and trusty leader to head them against the Reformers, the broad domains of Desmond would be lost to the family; robbery and confiscation were then the order of the day. They both agreed that James Fitz Maurice was the man to maintain their common rights, if they could only get a message sent to him. This, after great difficulty, they succeeded in doing; a trusty messenger was sent to Fitz Maurice, with a verbal request from the earl that he would take command of the Geraldine forces, and make head against the rapacious robbers who, in the name of religion, were possessing themselves of the lands and livings of the Irish Catholics.

“Fitz Maurice desired nothing more. It was his dearest wish to fight the battle of religion which was also that of his wronged and outraged kinsmen, and with his whole generous soul he took the harness on his shoulders for God and Native Land, and the rights of his cousin Desmond.

“But like a true Christian soldier as he was, he would not embark in so sacred a cause without the express sanction of religion; and the first step he

took was to send a herald to Rome to ask the blessing of the holy pontiff, Gregory XIII. in the undertaking he had in hand, praying the Pope to grant certain Indulgences to those Irish Catholics who were going to defend the faith at the peril of their lives. The Pope willingly acceded, and sent his warmest commendations to Fitz Maurice, urging him to fight manfully in the glorious cause of religion and country.

"Fired with renewed zeal by the Pontiff's approbation, Fitz Maurice hoisted again the banner of the Geraldines and unsheathed the sword of Desmond. With the valor of a Paladin of old, and a prudence rarely equalled, he carried on the war five whole years, making the most of the means of his command, and taking one stronghold after another, till at length Sir John Perrot, President at Munster, represented to the Queen that he could no longer resist him. James Fitz Maurice had undoubtedly become the most powerful man in Munster; his banner waved over towers and towns in every county of the Province; his name was a word of terror to the English soldiers and settlers, and the stoutest amongst the Protestant usurpers of Catholic lands in Ireland trembled at what things might come upon them if this all-prevailing Geraldine continued to overrun the country.

"In this emergency, Elizabeth sent an embassy to the Lord James Fitz Maurice requesting him to name the conditions on which he would

make peace. He replied that he would willingly lay down his arms, provided the liberty of Catholic worship were guaranteed, and his cousins restored to their country and possessions. The Queen agreed to these terms, casting about at the same time, in her own perfidious mind, how she could best evade their fulfilment.

"She, however, made a great show of generosity in regard to the Geraldine lords, her prisoners. She not only set them free but ordered a ship to be fitted out in royal state to carry them home to Ireland, and before their departure, caused them to be introduced to her presence. Nothing could be more gracious than her reception of the earl and his brother; as before, she admonished the Desmond to remember her royal clemency and never again to stain the honor of his ancient house with rebellion. The earl replied that nothing less than the defence of his own rights and those of his co-religionists could force him into rebellion. 'If your majesty,' said he, 'will only concede that these preachers of the new religion may not offer violence to ours, and neither seek to possess themselves of what is mine, I will be henceforth your loyal friend and subject. In temporal affairs I will be subject to your highness; but as regards religion, I owe allegiance to God.'

"The Queen was fain to appear pleased with these sentiments, and dismissed the earl and his brother with a great show of kindness. Little they thought that the tiger-hearted woman had given private in-

structions to the captain of the vessel not to put into any port in the earl's territories, but to take him at once to Dublin, where she had furthermore warned her Viceroy to detain him on one pretence and another, and to send his brother home to their country to bring his brother James to the capital, on a hospitable invitation from the Lord Deputy. Yet this was really the case, and it was carried out so far that the earl was conveyed to Dublin and John sent into the Desmond country to invite his brother to Dublin.

"But it so happened that one of the Lords of the Council, outwardly conforming to the new religion, but still friendly to the Catholics, gave the earl a hint of what was in store for him and his brothers, being nothing less than the execution of all three when once the Queen got them again into her power. Then the earl sent a trusty messenger to his brothers with a letter informing them of their danger, and charging them not to trust themselves within reach of the Lord Deputy, but to remain free on the fair wide plains of Munster. He himself escaped, early next morning, in disguise, and made his way in safety to his brothers and kinsmen in the mountains of Kerry,"

"And there we will leave him for the present," said Miss Fitzgerald rising, "I know not how it may be with you all, but for me I feel so drowsy that I can really sit up no longer."

"Very well, then, Margaret," said her uncle, "we will postpone the sequel till to-morrow evening.

Margaret then bade us "good-night," and retired.

The spell once broken, I had no wish to prolong my vigil, and Mr. Fitzgerald was not sorry, I could see, to seek that repose which his infirmities made doubly welcome.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE beauty of the following morning tempted me into the garden which lay in its homely, old-fashioned grace beneath my window. The birds were singing merrily on the lilacs and laburnums which shaded the parterres, and the air was balmy with the sweet scent of hawthorn blossoms; the early flowers of summer were peeping forth along the margin of the broad old shady alleys, and all was redolent of joy and sweetness. But my heart was not as gay as nature's face; I was thinking of the chances for and against my hopes of happiness, and doubt and fear had possession of my mind. The time had come when I must try my fate, and yet I shrank from doing what might destroy forever the illusions of the past few months.

Whilst I walked to and fro, revolving the matter in my mind, I was so absorbed in my own thoughts that I did not hear the gate open, and knew not that Margaret had come into the garden, till I heard her sweet voice singing low and soft. I did not catch the words she sang, but the air was plaintive; one of those old, old melodies which come from the heart, and to the heart address themselves. Turning quickly, I saw that the young lady was engaged watering her flowers in those shady parts of the garden where the

sun had not yet shone. It was clear that she had not seen me, and I was glad, for it gave me an opportunity of watching her, myself unseen, as she plied her womanly task, so well calculated to display her lythe and graceful form to full advantage.

At length I approached her; she turned quickly when she heard my step on the gravelled walk, and I thought the color deepened on her cheek as I bade her good morning. It might have been fancy, however, for her face was shaded by a broad-leaved straw hat such as peasant girls are wont to wear.

"Even so fair Flora might have looked in some academic shade of old," I said with a smile and a bow.

"Supposing her goddess-ship in so unclassical a costume as this of mine," said Margaret laughing merrily at the conceit; "however, I appreciate the compliment, Mr. Howard; have you been walking this morning?"

"Only

' These moss-grown alleys, musing slow,'

I replied. "And truly they *are* such as

' The saint or moralist might tread,

in meditative mood."

"Yes, the place is quiet enough, surely," glancing around on the familiar scene, "there is a sort of drowsy repose about it that I have often felt and enjoyed when sitting here, through long summer hours, sewing or reading."

"Happy they," I almost involuntarily exclaimed

"who might share with you those hours of calm repose!"

Surprised by the words and the fervor with which they were uttered, Margaret suspended her work, and looked so earnestly at me that I could not help smiling; it seemed as though she suspected me of some sudden mental aberration. There was a rustic seat near where she stood, and I asked if she would not sit down for a few moments while I spoke to her of something that much concerned myself, if no other.

"Pray excuse me, Mr. Howard!" she said in a hurried way, "I have delayed here too long already; my uncle and aunt must be down stairs by this time."

"Will you not give me five minutes—it is all I ask?"

"Well! I will wait for just so long—but not a moment longer," she said with her arch smile, playfully taking out her watch,—a very beautiful lever which had been given her by her godmother.

"You have not yet told me what you thought of my story," I said.

"What do you expect me to think or say of it, Mr. Howard? Of what importance is my opinion concerning it?"

"Suppose," I said slowly and emphatically, fixing my eyes on her face where a certain emotion was becoming visible, like the tremulous motion of a silvery lake stirred by a passing breeze,—“sup-

pose that you were the star of my destiny—that it was your image that came between Nina Ellersley and my heart?”

Instantly a bright glow crimsoned the sweet face on which my eyes rested so fondly, then fading as quickly, left cheek, and lip, and brow, blanched and pale.

“I, Mr. Howard!—*my* image come between you and your betrothed! I do not understand you. If you are jesting, it is a strange subject you have chosen.”

“The very last on which I would jest,” I replied, earnestly. “Miss Fitzgerald, I tell you plainly that it was my love for you that brought me back at this time to Kilorgan. I find that life is burdensome to me away from you, and I have come back to learn from your own lips whether I may hope to win your love.”

“Then that is a question I cannot answer, Mr. Howard,” said Margaret, with all her wonted self-possession, and stooping, she took up the watering-pot, which she had let fall. “My love is not easily won, I must inform you—all the less so for my being so poor.”

“But may I hope?” I said, taking her hand.

“How should I know?” was the provoking answer, and drawing her hand away, she darted off up the green alley, looking back at me with a saucy smile when she reached the garden-gate. There I was, left in as great uncertainty as ever

When we met at breakfast, half an hour later, there was not a trace of emotion visible on her face; a little graver than usual she might have been, but that was all. She spoke of their leaving Kilorgan, and asked her uncle whether he thought it would be best to go to Dublin.

"What should we do in Dublin, my dear?"

"Much better than we could do in the country, Uncle Maurice," replied the ex-heiress, in her quick, decided way. "There are many means of earning a living in a metropolitan city. In Dublin, I can easily obtain pupils for music, drawing, French or Italian. Thanks to my poor godmother, I can teach those 'branches,' " and she smiled.

"Poor child!" said her aunt, in a tremulous voice; "is it come to that with you, at last? Little Lady Berehaven thought that the accomplishments she gave you, in the pride of her heart, as the daughter of Gerald Fitzgerald of Kilorgan, should one day be necessary to support not only yourself, but your old uncle and aunt?"

"And to what better use could they be put?" said Margaret, cheerfully.

I sat playing with my spoon, affecting to take no notice of what was passing. I did feel a little annoyed, and could not help showing it. "Mr. Howard," said Margaret, "you seem in a contemplative mood this morning. Now suppose we made up a little excursion to-day, would you honor us with your company? That is, unless you are one of the sages

mentioned by Alexander Selkirk, who see charms in solitude's face?"

"I am not such an ardent lover of solitude as to wish to enjoy it alone," I replied, pointedly. "Even solitude must be shared with some one, to be enjoyed. If it have its holy joys,' as one of your Irish poets* says, that joy is, like others, often

"———unheeded and lost
For want of some heart that can echo it near."

"Then you will come?" she said, demurely.

"I feel honored for the asking," I replied, in the same tone. Our eyes met at the moment, and we both smiled.

What a day that was! We wandered away, away amongst the wild mountains, choosing the paths least toilsome for Uncle Maurice and Aunt Ella, and pausing occasionally to enable them to rest. White, fleecy clouds were floating at intervals over the blue vault of heaven, and their shadows flitted over the green mountain-slopes, alternating with the rich, golden sunshine. The fern and the furze decked the mountain-sides, and the sweet-smelling heather, with its bright purple bloom, spread like a carpet over the level ground that we found here and there amongst the hills. It was a day of exquisite enjoyment, and even now, after the lapse of years, I look back upon it as one of the happiest of my life. There was one thing wanting, however,—and, as Uncle Maurice said, a very important thing, too,—no provision appeared

* Richard D'Alton Williams. Poem: "Ben Edir."

to have been made of those "creature comforts" with which even "the feast of reason and the flow of soul,"—no, nor yet the fullness of contentment can enable us to dispense. Margaret took the blame upon herself, and apologized in a way that amused, while it puzzled me. As the hours rolled on, the old gentleman became more querulous, Margaret looking more and more penitent, as it seemed.

"It is one comfort," she said, very demurely, "that we are not far from home. Mr. Howard, do you know where we are now?"

We had just descended into a small valley, and, looking around, I began to recognize the features of the scene. "Why yes; this is your 'solitude,' Miss Fitzgerald—is it not?"

"It looks very much like it," she said, with her brightest smile. "And now let us rest a while at my Summer castle. Or would you rather go home, Uncle Maurice?"

"Home! Why, child, I am scarce able to stand on my legs, I am so exhausted. If I had only a glass of wine, or anything in the shape of refreshment!"

"Well, try and get as far as the cave," said Margaret, "and as the place is enchanted ground, who knows but some kind fairy might provide something for the entertainment of us poor pilgrims of nature?"

"Provide indeed!" her uncle replied, more gruffly than I had ever heard him speak. "When those who ought to have provided didn't provide, there is little

chance of fairies making up for the neglect. But stay! What is that?"

I followed the direction of his eyes, and lo! at the very mouth of the cave stood a small table, on which was arranged the nicest little repast; substantial enough to suit the sharpened appetite, yet elegant and inviting. Margaret and I exchanged glances; we both enjoyed the old gentleman's pleased surprise.

"Why, how is this, Margaret?"

"I really cannot tell you, uncle," said the arch girl, "unless it be the fairy aforesaid, who has taken compassion on our necessities. I hope you are none of you afraid to partake of the good things so unexpectedly provided for us."

"What do you all mean?" asked Aunt Ella.

"Why, only think, Ellice," said her brother, "here is a table set all ready to our hand, and plenty on it to eat and drink—a regular cold dinner."

"That is so like Margaret," said Miss Fitzgerald, "always preparing agreeable surprises."

"Well, wherever the viands came from," said Margaret, laughing, "take your seats, good people, and set about doing justice to them. Mr. Howard, you will find some chairs inside. Pray excuse me for troubling you, but you see our invisible entertainer did not furnish servants. We must wait on ourselves." My eyes told her, if my tongue did not, how happy I was to be called on to assist in carrying out her fanciful device.

"Oh, you little witch!" said Uncle Maurice, when we were all seated comfortably, and he had refreshed the inner man with a glass of fine old Sherry. "You little witch! What tricks you do play on travellers!"

"Well! I do not admit having played this particular trick, Uncle Maurice; but whoever played it, I hope you are not *very* angry!"

"Not so angry but that I can enjoy my dinner."

"In such a banquet-hall as this, who could not?" I said. "But in acknowledgment of this graceful hospitality, the least we can do is to drink the health of our entertainer. Who knows but it is the royal Titania herself, but if so, we will drink to her representative," and I bowed to Margaret, whose smiling eyes acknowledged the compliment.

The repast ended, we sauntered along the quiet valley in the shade of the tall mountains till the sun, declining westward, reminded us that evening was approaching. We then returned to the cave and found that the table had disappeared, but on a bough near the entrance hung Margaret's guitar, with its broad blue ribbon, looking, as I told her, like the ribbon of the Garter.*

"Now, Uncle Maurice," said Margaret, "this is my programme: you tell Mr. Howard the remainder

* To some of our readers it may be necessary to explain that the Order of the Garter is the royal order of England. It was instituted by King Edward III. Its distinctive mark is a broad blue ribbon worn diagonally across the bosom.

of that story about Earl Garrett, and my great favorite amongst the Geraldines, James Fitz Maurice. Then we shall have some music, and after the moon has risen we shall go back to the house to a late tea. Are you all content?"

Uncle Maurice and Aunt Ella answered in the affirmative, and so did I, as in duty bound, but how more than content I was with Margaret's programme none but she herself could understand.

Uncle Maurice resumed his narrative as follows:

"When the Earl of Desmond and his two brothers came to consider all the treachery of which they had been the victims, and the little hope there was of their ever being allowed peace or rest unless they could shake off the authority of the English Queen, they resolved to make another effort for their independence and that of their country. The tocsin rang again through the hills and valleys, and over the fertile plains of South Munster, and to the great joy of the oppressed people, the proud banner of the Geraldines was again flung to the breeze. Throughout the Desmond country all was war and wild excitement; the people everywhere rose in arms and thronged around the standard of their lord and chief. Then did the Earl, his brothers and kinsmen, swear a solemn oath, as did all their people, that they would never again lay down their arms till freedom was proclaimed in the land, till every man was at liberty to worship God according to his conscience,

and to have and to hold in peace what of right belonged to him.†

“So bravely and steadily was the war carried on against the English, that after some months of hard fighting, the wily Elizabeth was fain to send an embassy again to the Earl of Desmond proposing peace. The Earl had little mind to make peace with the fierce and faithless enemy of his race and religion, but his treasury was well nigh exhausted, and his people needed breathing time; so he concluded a two years’ treaty with Queen Elizabeth, on the express terms that no one should be persecuted for being a Catholic within the territory of Desmond, and that neither he nor his brothers, nor any of his kinsmen, should be summoned before the Lord President. These were two great points which the Geraldines had gained by their gallant resistance to English tyranny.

“But the earl knew well that at the end of the two years, if not sooner, Elizabeth would renew the war with increased strength, nor rest till she had

† A native chronicler of the Desmond Geraldines, Father Dominick O’Daly, wrote on this period in his Latin memoirs of that great family, dedicated to the Cardinals Barberini, true friends of Ireland: “As I have said, they (the Geraldines) resolved to slay and be slain, rather than suffer the Catholic religion to be outraged within their territories. Lo! here was magnanimity, here was honor! Oh! would to God all the nobles of Ireland had rallied round their banners! How glorious would not this nation have been to-day! But those who failed them declined from the right path, and bitter has been their penalty.”—*O’Daly’s “Geraldines, Earls of Desmond”* translated by Rev. C. Meehan.

crushed him and his, unless he were in a position to cope successfully with her officers. In order to prepare for the coming danger, Desmond sent his cousin Fitz Maurice to Rome, and also to France and Spain, soliciting aid in men and money. Now James Fitz Maurice had been much averse to the treaty with the English, and had endeavored to dissuade the earl from making it, but now that it was made, there was nothing for it but to keep it, and make due preparations for its expiration. James was quite willing to undertake this important embassy, but prior to his departure, he had a duty to perform towards his family. Travelling in those days was more perilous and more tedious than it is now, and, in case any evil befel him on his way, this truly noble chieftain, desirous to secure an independence for his wife and children, who were still young, requested the Earl to make over to him, for that purpose, certain lands to which he had a just claim. This the Earl was, at first, willing to do, but on consulting with his wife, a lady of the Ormond family, she represented to him that it would be wrong to curtail the family possessions to the detriment of his own son, then an infant. The Earl, accordingly told his cousin that he could not consent to make over any of his estates to him *in perpetua*, but that he would see that his family were well provided for during his absence."

"Was not that selfish and ungrateful on the part of the Earl?" I said. "Surely Fitz Maurice asked no

more than he was entitled to, after all the service he had rendered his noble kinsmen."

"You say true, Mr. Howard; the Earl's conduct on that occasion was wholly inexcusable, and can only be accounted for by an overweening fondness for his haughty and beautiful wife, who, being a Butler, had probably but little sympathy for the cause to which the Desmond Geraldines were devoted, and of which James Fitz Maurice was the heart and soul, if her husband, in virtue of his rank, was the head."

"But what effect had this unkind refusal on Fitz Maurice?"

"That is just what I want to tell you, because it proves, more than anything, the truly great character of the Catholic leader of that day. Grieved and disappointed, as he undoubtedly was, Fitz Maurice never allowed his private feelings to interfere with the duty he owed his faith and country. He well knew that a rupture between him and the Earl would be certain ruin to the cause to which his life was devoted. He set out, therefore, on his arduous and toilsome mission, taking with him his two young sons, Maurice and Gerald, who, being mere children, he feared to leave behind, lest they might unhappily fall into the hands of the ruthless enemy. He thought that by having them with himself, he could watch over their safety, and that in case he never returned to Ireland, they would be trained up abroad in a manner befitting their rank, so that they might one day become

defenders of their faith and country, as he himself had been.

"Fitz Maurice went first to France, where he was graciously received by the King, who promised him ample supplies for the war about to be waged in defence of the faith. Unfortunately, his ministers, more politic, were not so warm in the cause as their royal master, and, fearing to embroil France with England, they managed to withhold the promised supplies, and left the Catholics of Ireland to fight their own battle.

"The Spanish Court was next tried, and with little better success; like the King of France, the Spanish monarch received the great Irish leader with friendly courtesy, and deeply sympathized with the oppressed Irish Catholics, but, as it happened, had just concluded a treaty of peace with the Queen of England, and could not, therefore, give any effective aid, however much he might wish it. The only thing he felt himself at liberty to do was to give Fitz Maurice a letter of recommendation to the Pope, begging of the Holy Father to do all he could in furtherance of his views, and to take into his special consideration the condition of the Irish Catholics."

"And you know what the Spanish King did for Fitz Maurice's sons, uncle!" said Margaret, who was, I saw, deeply interested in the subject.

"Yes;" he no sooner saw the two beautiful boys than he conceived a warm affection for them, and was moved with compassion for the hard fate that sent

even the young children of so noble a race wandering as suppliants in foreign lands. He proposed to take charge of them himself, and their father gratefully accepting the flattering proposal, the generous monarch placed the noble youths under the care of Cardinal Granville, then Papal Legate at the Court of Madrid. Cardinal Granville, be it said *en passant*, was by birth a Burgundian. He was an enthusiastic friend of Ireland, as many other princes of the Church have been. He was a man of profound learning and brilliant talents, as you may infer from the fact that he was in the habit of dictating to five secretaries in five different languages at the same time. The two young Geraldines were educated at the royal expense in the University of Alcalá. They were youths of such noble mien and such excellent dispositions that they made friends for themselves wherever they appeared. Even at court they are said to have attracted general attention on account of their wit, and grace, and beauty. Their fellow-students all loved them notwithstanding their superiority, but one there was who was so entirely devoted to them that no ties of kindred could have bound him and them more closely together. This was Thomas Granville, nephew of the Cardinal, himself a youth of great promise. But alas! this boyish friendship was soon broken by the shaft of death; Maurice Fitzgerald, the eldest of the brothers, died before the completion of his college course, far away from home

and kindred, yet surrounded by sympathizing friends. Young Granville thenceforth clung to the surviving brother Gerald with all a brother's love.

"But let us return to James Fitz Maurice Fitzgerald, the father of these noble youths. After leaving his sons so well provided for in Spain, he proceeded to Rome where he was received by the reigning Pontiff, Gregory XIII., with warm affection. Recognizing in him a true soldier of the cross, Gregory did all he could to further his views; gave him a large sum of money towards defraying the expenses of the war, and promised to send both arms and men to Ireland with as little delay as possible. He exhorted Fitz Maurice to continue his heroic efforts in defence of the faith, telling him that in him he should ever find a friend. The Pontiff then wrote a letter to the Catholics of Ireland admonishing them to stand, firm in the faith they had received from the saints, and to defend it at all hazards, giving them at the same time his paternal benediction; in this letter, the Holy Father appointed the Earl of Desmond Commander-in-chief of the Catholic army, James Fitz Maurice his lieutenant, and in case of James' death, John of Desmond was to take his place, and if he fell, he was to be succeeded by his brother James.*

"This all happily arranged, the brave Fitz Maurice began to feel anxious to return home; he had left his wife and some young children in Ireland, whom

* For this letter of Pope Gregory XIII. to the Irish Catholics, see Appendix.

he naturally longed to see again; moreover, he feared that his prolonged absence might damp the spirits of the people who looked to him for support and guidance. He, therefore, took leave of the Holy Father, and, as the promised supplies were not yet in readiness, he introduced to the Pope an English friend of his named Sir Thomas Stukeley, whose acquaintance he had made in Spain, and who, being a Catholic and a gallant soldier, was desirous of serving the cause in Ireland, and would gladly take charge of the Papal forces on their way to Ireland.

“With that keen insight into human character which the servants of God are wont to possess in an eminent degree, Gregory privately told Fitz-Maurice that he feared this English knight was not the man he took him for, and that if he followed his advice, he would not trust him to such an extent. But Fitz Maurice, who was by nature open and unsuspicious, hastened to assure the Holy Father that if he knew Stukeley as well as he did, he would not hesitate to trust him, and that he would answer for his fidelity. Hearing this, the Pope was fain to agree to the proposed arrangement, but he did so with a heavy heart. He had still a sad misgiving that Stukeley was not reliable. at Fitz Maurice’s request, the Englishman was appointed Vice-Admiral of the fleet, of which he himself had the chief command. This fleet was to convey to Ireland two thousand choice men from

the Roman States. With a heart full of grateful affection Fitz Maurice then bade what proved to be an eternal adieu to the Pontiff and sailed for Ireland, leaving Stukeley to follow, as soon as the expedition was duly arranged. Paying a short visit to his sons in Spain, Fitz Maurice then sailed for Ireland with a small force of Spaniards, and landed on the coast of Kerry. What came of it all I will tell you, Mr. Howard, to-morrow evening."

After chatting a while over the stirring scenes of the evening's recital, we retired to our several apartments. For myself, having no inclination to sleep, I threw open my window and sat for hours after enjoying the balmy freshness of the air and the gorgeous beauty of the moonlit, starry heavens, thinking of all things bright and fair—and most of Margaret Fitzgerald.



CHAPTER XVIII.

I SLEPT but little that night, my mind was in such a state of feverish suspense. The morning light found me still wakeful, and, finding that "tired Nature's sweet restorer" would not or could not be wooed to "light on *my* lids," although "unsullied by a tear," I arose, made a hasty toilet and descended the stairs with as little noise as possible. On reaching the hall-door I was surprised to find it unlocked, and supposed that Mr. Fitzgerald, who usually secured the doors and windows, had forgotten it over night. Opening the door and closing it after me as gently as I could, I walked out in the yet gray morning. A few stars were still lingering in the dim, misty sky, and the night vapors were slowly rolling away from the steep mountain-sides; the air was soft and mild, but the freshness of the infant day was abroad on the earth, and the young leaves were stirred with a faint tremulous motion like the sighing of the breeze through the strings of an Eolian harp. The silence and the hushed repose of the gracious time were soothing to my troubled mind,—I felt a strange pleasure in the thought that all the world was sleeping, I alone awake to the sweet and hallowed influences of the primal hour. Like Alexander Selkirk I was, for the time, "monarch of all I survey'd."

Desirous of obtaining a more extensive view of the country round, I ascended one of the heights overlooking Kilorgan Valley, and there the first object that presented itself was a pillar-stone which probably marked the long-forgotten resting-place of some mighty man of old. A half-effaced inscription in those quaint Ogham characters, which antiquarians love to decipher, doubtless told the story of the buried dead, but to me it was not given to read it. The place was wild and lonely, and the presence of this ancient monument rising all spectral through the morning mist, like a spirit from the long-past ages, the old pagan past, gave an air of solemn mystery to the surrounding scene.

Allowing my thoughts to follow the direction into which they had been thrown by the sight of this strange relic of the past, I stood leaning against it looking dreamily out over the green hills and valleys, whose sylvan charms looked lovelier, still half seen through their blue, misty veil. All at once, the clear shrill voice of the lark broke the charmed silence, and from the top of a mountain-ash near me I saw the bird of morning wing its flight through the stilly air.

Having sufficiently enjoyed the lonely beauty of the scene, I was about to continue my ramble, when, casting my eyes down the steep path by which I had gained my elevated position, I saw a female figure ascending the narrow path-way, and what was my glad surprise when I recognised Margaret Fitzgerald in her

gray cloak and cottage bonnet. She was evidently in a hurry, and was moving as rapidly as the steepness of the path permitted. She had reached the level ground above, and was continuing her way across the hill without seeing me. A few steps brought me to her side, and I quite enjoyed the surprise with which she saw me there so unexpectedly.

"Why, Mr. Howard! how early you are abroad this morning!—You are truly 'up with the lark!'"

"Yes, I was just watching the flight of one, and listening to his 'wood-notes wild' as you made your appearance. I have been communing with the spirit of the past, evoked by the sight of yonder stone,' pointing to it.

"Oh! the pillar-stone!—I'm glad you found it out yourself. I intended that we should call your attention to it. But I suppose you have often seen such before. In Brittany, you know, they are quite common, also in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, and, I believe, even in the Scandinavian countries they are frequently to be met. This one is said to mark the grave of a wizard prince of the Tuatha de Danaans, —a race to whom tradition ascribes more than mortal power. I have often wished that some one skilled in the occult language of the stones would happen to come this way, that we might have those strange characters deciphered."

"You appear to be in haste, Miss Fitzgerald," I said seeing that she still kept walking quickly

"One would think you were out on business of importance, early as the hour is."

"And I am," she said with her cheery smile, "I am on business of importance. I am going in search of a woman to 'drop potatoes' for us.—If you know what that is?"

I acknowledged my ignorance.

"Well, 'dropping' means scattering the seed potatoes over the ground before the men who are engaged planting, or, as we here say, *setting* them, who afterwards cover them up with their spades."

"You are quite a farmer, Miss Fitzgerald!"

"A farmer indeed! why, bless you, little Peter, or any child of his age, could tell you more than that about farming. But, Mr. Howard, you must excuse me if I hurry on and leave you, for I have some distance to go, and we must have the women by the time our men come to work."

"Will you deny me the pleasure of accompanying you?"

"I must and will," she said, laughing and shaking her head; "the country people around here would be scandalized to see me with such a companion so far from home. I must leave you, then, but be sure you stay out till breakfast-time, for I think you have not been looking so well since you came back, and the fresh morning air will do you good. Turn down that way," pointing with her hand, "and you will come to something worth seeing,—one of those old

raths which our simple peasantry regard as the abode of the fairies."

I was fain to follow her advice, and after a few minutes' walk reached the old earthen fort, where it sat on its lonely hill covered with the grass of ages, and commanding a view of the country for miles around. I was struck with the sight of it undoubtedly, but it was not of the old, old times—probably beyond the reach of history,—when it was raised by the hands of men as the fortress-dwelling of some warrior-chief of those patriarchal days, with his household and his cattle, and all that was his. Nor yet of the fairy kings and queens, the supposed successors of the original owners, who are said to hold their court within the raths, and thence to march their tiny bands the country over when the children of earth are in slumber bound. It was of Margaret I thought, and the kind words she had spoken. "You have not been looking so well since you came back; stay out till breakfast time, the air will do you good." True, there was nothing in the words that expressed any particular interest in me: the kind-hearted girl might have said as much to any mere acquaintance, and I could reasonably build no hope on such a few passing words of kindness; but still from Margaret's lips they were of value to me, and made my heart glow with pleasurable emotion.

An hour after when Margaret returned, I was sitting on the bench by the house-door with Uncle

Maurice, who had just come down stairs. As she passed in she glanced at me, and said with one of her brightest smiles :

“ I told you the air would do you good. You look ever so much better. How did you like the rath? Never mind, you can tell me again. I cannot wait now, I must go to Aunt Ella.”

At breakfast, Margaret told how she had met me at the pillar-stone on the hill, and how she had directed me to the rath; an interesting conversation followed on the more ancient antiquities of the country—the sepulchral, military and religious monuments of the pagan races who succeeded each other on its soil. The subject, if not altogether new to me, was yet of peculiar interest, and I was pleased to hear many things relating to it that were not to be found in books.

The morning was somewhat hazy, and Mr. Fitzgerald and Margaret were afraid that it might “ turn to rain,” which would interfere with the farming operations then successfully going on; the men had, of course, come in due time, and Margaret had happily succeeded in procuring the women required for the ‘ dropping ’ aforesaid. Luckily their fears were unfounded, for just as we left the breakfast-table the sun shone out through the parting clouds with that calm and steady lustre which promises a continuance of fine weather.

During the greater part of the day Mr. Fitzgerald was out in the fields with his men,—“ or rather with

your cousin's men," said Margaret by way of correction, as we stood side by side in the early twilight, with the crimson flush of the western sky giving warmer tints to her animated features. Uncle Maurice had not yet returned from the field, and Aunt Ella was dozing in her chair in the parlor.

"Talking of my cousin," said I, "reminds me that I cannot possibly remain much longer at Kilorgan. Will you pardon me, Miss Fitzgerald, if I take this opportunity of resuming a subject that may be distasteful to you?"

"As I do not know what subject you mean, I really cannot say, Mr. Howard; but I scarcely think you will speak on any subject that a lady may not hear."

"Thanks for your good opinion, even though its expression be no more than ordinary politeness. You remember what I had been saying to you the other evening when your uncle awaking gave a different turn to the conversation?"

"Yes, I remember all about Nina Ellersley."

"And Miss Margaret Fitzgerald."

"Excuse me, Mr. Howard," said Margaret, with freezing coldness; "I really did not think that I was at all concerned. One so poor as I cannot listen to words of love from such as you."

"Miss Fitzgerald," I said, with honest fervor, "you are not poor. You are rich in every virtue, in every accomplishment; rich in womanly grace, and of lineage equal to the best in England, which I claim as

mine. You are all that I ever dreamed of in a wife—all that my fondest wishes could desire. Shall I wish and hope in vain?"

For some moments Margaret remained silent, and I did not dare to look in her face. At length she said in what seemed to me a cold, passionless tone:

"Mr. Howard, what I might do under other circumstances is not the question now. Suffice it to say that Margaret Fitzgerald can never be the portionless bride of one to whom God has given affluence. Poor I am, and poor I shall remain; unless," she added with a faint smile, "my lost inheritance comes back to me, which is little likely to happen, as you may suppose."

"But what if I were not very much richer than yourself," I said, endeavoring to suppress the smile that rose to my lips; "would I then be admissible?"

"It is quite unnecessary to say whether you would or not;" said Margaret, with the greatest possible composure, "as I happen to know that you *are* 'much richer than myself,' the hypothesis will not hold. I tell you, Mr. Howard, my lot is cast with my dear uncle and aunt, while God spares them to me, and to shield their helpless age from want and penury is my chief, my only earthly care. Can you understand that?"

"I can both understand and appreciate it," I said, speaking with some effort; "but you cannot wonder if it only makes me more unwilling to give up hope." Margaret turned suddenly and fixed her sweet earn

est eyes upon me with an expression that I could not understand.

"Mr. Howard," she said, "I should be sorry, indeed, to see you wasting your hours and days in the vain pursuit of an empty shadow. Go back to your own country and seek out one who, in fortune and position, may be what I could not be, a suitable wife for you. Will you do this?" She held out her hand to me as she spoke; I took the hand and held it for a moment in mine, but I did not give the required promise. In silence I turned away and left the room. I was vexed with Margaret, and found it hard to forgive her for her stoical indifference to my feelings; while respecting, as I could not help respecting, her unselfish devotion to her uncle and aunt who had so many claims on her sympathy.

When we met at tea I carefully avoided looking at Margaret. The tones of her voice were just the same as usual,—if anything more gay and cheerful.

Once, when our eyes chanced to meet, I could not help looking the reproach that my lips might not utter, but Margaret appeared wholly unconscious. "Strange," I thought, and I asked myself—"Is she heartless, after all, or dull of perception?—one or the other I begin to fear that she must be."

When the usual time came, Uncle Maurice resumed the sad story of the last Geraldine wars:

"It was an evil day for the cause of Ireland when the command of the Papal reinforcements was given to Stukely. The expedition being all in readiness,

the English knight took leave of the Holy Father, promising to fulfil his instructions to the letter; it is hard to say what motive it was that induced him to sail for Portugal instead of making direct for Ireland where the supplies under his charge were, he knew so anxiously expected. It was just at the time when the gallant and chivalrous, but ill-fated Sebastian, King of that country, was preparing his memorable expedition* against the infidel Moors of Africa. No sooner did the king hear of the arrival in his dominions of the valiant English knight with a large body of well-trained Christian soldiers, than sending for Stukely he asked him to join the African expedition, promising that after they had conquered the Moors, he would assist the Irish with all the force he could command. The promise was a tempting one, as the fame of the chivalrous young king had extended throughout Europe, and it may be that Stukely really thought he was but securing a powerful friend for the Irish Catholics at the cost to them of a few months, or, perhaps, a few weeks' delay. So forgetting his promises to the Pope and Fitz Maurice, he accompanied King Sebastian to Africa, with the force under his command. Alas! how different was the ending of this African crusade from that anticipated by the too sanguine and enthusiastic prince who planned it in his fervent zeal for religion! Sebastian perished,

* This ill-starred expedition, and the adventures of the young Portuguese King, furnished Miss Jane Porter with the material for her fine historical novel of "Don Sebastian"

on the arid soil of Africa in the prime of his glorious manhood, and with him the unlucky friend of James Fitz Maurice, the faithless Stukely, with the flower of the Portuguese army, and nearly all the Papal soldiers intended for Ireland! But this sad disaster was some time before it reached Ireland, and Earl Desmond and his brothers, and his valiant kinsman, especially the latter, left nothing undone that could cheer the flagging spirits of the people, or in any way advance the cause.

"I am now about to tell you a fact that will give you a still higher opinion of the noble and chivalrous character of James Fitz Maurice. From the position of affairs, as I have explained it to you, you can easily understand how all-important it was for this heroic leader to keep up the spirit of unanimity amongst the Catholic people of all classes, and to keep his little army together at any cost. But very soon after his retaking the field, on his return from the Continent, he learned, to his horror and disgust, that his cousin, John of Desmond, had broken with a strong party by night into one of the Earl's castles, of which an Englishman named Sir Henry Danvers had possessed himself, and slew Danvers and some other gentlemen, his friends. What made the matter still more odious in the eyes of Fitz Maurice was that Danvers and John of Desmond were bound by the ties of gossipred. He contented himself for that time with remonstrating with his cousin on the disgraceful action he had committed, telling him that cold-blooded

cruelty was little likely to advance any cause, east of all that of religion. It was not long, however before news reached Fitz Maurice that some of John's men had committed another most disgraceful act, so odious before God and man that, when John refused to punish the offenders, the pious and chivalrous Fitz Maurice made up his mind that, come what might, he would no longer have such a man for his brother-in-arms. He believed that such crimes were likely to draw down the anger of heaven on the cause in which they were engaged, and that the war he was waging being chiefly a religious war, purity of life and morals could no how be dispensed with in those who marched to battle under Desmond's banner.

"So he withdrew his forces from those of John and marched towards Connaught, where he expected to be joined by John De Burgh, a brother of the Marquis of Clanrickarde. On his way he turned aside to pay a visit to the famous shrine of Holy Cross, in fulfilment of a vow he had made. Alas! it was his preparation for eternity, although he then knew it not. Having left the Abbey, he resumed his journey towards the De Burgo country, into which he had scarcely entered, when in crossing the estate of Theobald Burke, a cousin of his own, he was surprised to see that personage pursuing him with a large force.

"Fitz Maurice immediately sent a messenger to ask what this hostile appearance meant, beseeching his cousin not to commit any act of violence or at-

tempt to impede his course. Burke, well knowing that he could do nothing more pleasing to Queen Elizabeth than to rid her of so formidable an enemy, sent back word for Fitz Maurice to prepare for battle. Now this was the more disgraceful on the part of Burke that his brave cousin, anticipating no danger in such a quarter, had only with him about a hundred foot soldiers and a small detachment of cavalry, whereas he himself had a strong force.

"Fitz Maurice, finding that his unworthy kinsman really meant to oppose his passage, immediately drew up his men in order of battle. In the fierce engagement that followed, both parties fought well; the Geraldine soldiers, although so far inferior in numbers, not only stood their ground gallantly, but, encouraged by the words and animated by the example of their heroic leader, who himself fought like an angry lion, they began to prevail over the enemy. But just as the tide of victory was turning in their favor, the brave Fitz Maurice was struck down by a well-aimed bullet. But though wounded in the breast, he was not killed, as his treacherous kinsman found to his cost. Breathing a fervent prayer to Heaven that he might have strength to secure the victory for his faithful followers before he died, if die he must, he made one mighty effort, cut his way through the enemy's ranks, making, as chroniclers tell, 'a lane for himself,' till he reached the spot where the traitor Theobald Burke was urging on his men to the disgraceful combat, and crying out—'This for the

enemy of his faith and country,' clove him through to the belt, with one blow of his terrible falchion. William Burke, the brother of Theobald, then attacking him, the indomitable hero dealt him such another blow as sent him after his brother to the shades below; which seeing, the De Burgo soldiers, seized with a sudden panic, turned and fled,—fled from the angry face of the Avenger!"

"Few and faint, but fearless still,"

the men of Desmond remained masters of the field.

"But alas! Their rejoicing was soon turned to mourning. No sooner had the enemy fled, eagerly pursued by the Geraldine soldiers, than Fitz Maurice, after returning thanks to God, requested to be left alone with his chaplain, Dr. Allen—a pious and exemplary English priest, who accompanied him in all his military expeditions. 'I will tell you now, my friends,' said he, to the few of his men who remained with him, 'I will tell you now, what I would not tell you before, that I am mortally wounded,' laying his hand on his breast, 'and must soon appear before the judgment-seat of God. Thank God, I have always borne my last hour in mind even in life and health. Fall back, now, in silence, and leave me to prepare for death as a Christian should.' In sorrowful silence his men obeyed, and, with a heavy heart, the good priest administered the last solemn rites to the dying soldier of Christ. This first great duty faithfully discharged, Fitz Maurice made his will, charging the Earl of Desmond and his brothers never to make

peace with the English heretics, unless the rights of religion were fully secured, and the Pope's instructions faithfully carried out. The will made, James Fitz Maurice calmly disposed himself for death. 'I am thankful,' said he, 'to die for the Faith; it has ever been my hope and prayer so to die; but if it were God's will, I would fain have lived to see the issue of this contest. Now I must go just when Stukely and the Italian soldiers must be well-nigh landing in Ireland. But God's will be done! He gave my life; to him I give it back. Blessed be His name.' And so he died. When his men returned from the pursuit, flushed with glory, how their hearts were pierced with sorrow on seeing their idolized leader stretched in the cold embrace of death, Dr. Allen reciting the prayers for the dead, and the few soldiers who had witnessed the sad scene kneeling around the honored remains."

"How mysterious are the ways of Providence!" said Margaret, with a pallid cheek and tearful eyes. "What a crushing blow Fitz Maurice's death must have been to the poor oppressed Catholics of Ireland!"

"Yes, my dear, his death was, indeed, a great calamity, and so it was felt throughout the whole land. Not only the people of Desmond, but all Ireland, mourned long and sincerely for the valiant, pious, noble-hearted Irish chieftain, the hope of the Catholic cause in Ireland, and as such regarded throughout Catholic Europe—he whose spotless life, fervent

piety, and heroic valor recalled in a degenerate age the memory of a Bayard or Du Guesclin, a veritable *preux chevalier* of the olden time, a knight not only *sans peurs*, but *sans reproche*. Oh! the sad day it was for Irish Catholics, and the day of joy and exultation for the persecuting followers of the new religion, when the noble Fitz Maurice, the flower of Irish chivalry, fell by the hand of some obscure hireling of the Burkes on that bloody field of Connaught!

“Well for him that he died without knowing of Stukely’s treachery; still hoping that he was soon to arrive in Ireland with the Papal reinforcements, and that all the Catholic lords and chiefs would immediately join the national army. He died in happy unconsciousness that the Pope’s generous aid had been perverted from its destined use, and that, for the present, at least, nothing more could be expected from beyond seas.

“Agreeably to the Pope’s instructions, and Fitz Maurice’s dying injunction, John of Desmond assumed the chief command of the Catholic army, the Earl co operating with him. Too soon it became known in the country that the Irish had only themselves to depend on. Nevertheless, these dauntless chieftains carried on the war with as much vigor and as much enthusiasm as though nothing had occurred to damp their ardor. It is truly marvellous how they managed to maintain war so long and so successfully against the whole power of Elizabeth. On one occasion, when a great British force was brought against

them, they gained a signal victory, although the English were commanded by the Duke of York, and other generals of note. But alas! the more the Geraldines prevailed in open field, the more did the English revenge their discomfiture on the helpless women and children of the garrisons, so that the country became one scene of carnage, and no man dared to till the land. The struggle waxed fiercer and fiercer, and the world looked on with anxious interest to see whether Catholicity was still to flourish on the soil of Ireland, or whether it was to be crushed under foot and Protestantism planted over its ruins.

"But alas! just when success seemed all but certain, another sad disaster befell the noble Geraldines of Munster. It so happened that the Lord James Fitzgerald, younger brother of Desmond, had led a strong force into Muskerry, the lord of which territory, Cormac Mac Teig, had kept coldly aloof from the national cause. The gallant young noble was returning to his own country with his victorious troops, when he was pursued and overtaken by Mac Teig. A battle ensued in which James was taken prisoner, and sent to Dublin to the safe keeping of the Lord President. Now history records of this same functionary, Lord President Gray, that he left Queen Elizabeth little in Ireland to rule over save ashes and dead bodies. You may, therefore, imagine what clemency he was likely to show to one of the bravest leaders of the

rebellious Catholics, a brother, moreover of the ever refractory Earl of Desmond.

"Ordering Lord James to be brought before him, the deputy, affecting to pity his extreme youth, urged him to renounce the Catholic faith, and acknowledge the Queen's supremacy; promising him all manner of honors and dignities, if would only join the royal army. But the noble spirit of the young Geraldine spurned such offers. He boldly declared, that he would live and die a Catholic, as his fathers did before him, and that he never could and never would acknowledge any other visible head to the church than the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter.

For this heroic constancy to his faith, the generous youth was condemned to be beheaded, his intestines burned, his body cut in quarters, and hung in chains from the gates of Cork, all of which was duly executed, and another of the Geraldines suffered a glorious martyrdom."

"I do not wonder," I said, "that the Irish people cherish the memory of a race which has done and suffered so much for their country and their faith."

"You will wonder less," uncle Maurice replied, "when we have followed the Catholic Geraldines to their sad end."

"And a sad end it was," said his sister sorrowfully; "surely, if their name be *not* cherished in Ireland, I know of none that has a better right to fond remembrance, for they suffered all, and lost all for Ireland and her faith." She rose as she spoke, and Mar-

garet and she bidding us "good night," retired; Margaret saying to me with a smile as she passed. "I should think *your* eyes would be heavy by this time, Mr. Howard; you were so early abroad this morning."

"On the contrary," I replied; "I feel the less inclined to sleep for my morning ramble." Margaret smiled and bowed as she left the room, with that graceful ease which characterized all her motions.



CHAPTER XIX.

As I passed through the hall next morning, intending to go out for a walk, I saw Margaret in the parlor busily engaged dusting and arranging the furniture. The windows were all open, and the balmy air and the bright sunshine came streaming in; the fresh breeze of morning gently fanned the leaves of the trees outside, and the birds sang their matin song on the boughs; but Margaret sang no more, and I missed the pleasant voice I was wont to hear in the early morning carolling like the lark or linnet. Silently she flitted about, graceful as a fawn, the very genius, it seemed, of the old ancestral hall, where her fathers had enjoyed manorial honors.

Lost in thought, and unconsciously following that one darling object with my eyes, I stood in the doorway, heedless of the flight of time, oblivious of my intended walk. All at once Margaret turned round and saw me. No exclamation escaped her, but a sort of softened look was in her eyes as she met my thoughtful, steady gaze. I noticed that she was paler than I had ever seen her.

"Good morning, Mr. Howard!" she said in a careless, off-handed way, "are you going for a walk? You ought to go, it is such a lovely morning. I should like to be out myself if I had only time.

"Will you come with me?" I said, darting forward and taking her hand before she could prevent it. "Do come, Miss Fitzgerald!—oh! if you only knew what joy, what happiness it would be for me to walk abroad with you in the cool, fresh morning hour, when the world is awaking from the sleep of night, and the gladness of earth makes even the sad heart rejoice. Margaret! for I *will* call you so, take it as you may—Margaret, give me one half hour—it is still early, and you can spare so much time to one who loves you as you will never be loved again!"

"Mr. Howard," said Margaret, and she gently withdrew her hand from mine, "what you ask is not for me to grant,—I know not how it may be with you in England, but with us in Ireland"—she paused and raised her smiling eyes to mine, "with us in Ireland, it is not allowable for young ladies to walk out alone with gentlemen. I merely tell you that," and she smiled, "as one of our national customs, think of it what you may."

"Ah! I understand," I said pointedly, "this, then, is part of

"——— the wild sweet-briery fence
Which round the flowers of Erin dwells."

and, perhaps, you are right, you Irish. At least I will not say that you are wrong, for it is undeniably true of this same 'sweet briery fence' that it

"——— warns the touch while winning the sense,
Nor charms us least when it most repels."

"I see you have been studying Moore to some ad

vantage," observed Margaret, still continuing her work. "Of course you know 'Love's Young Dream?'"

"Of course I do—what then?"

"Oh! nothing in particular, but that for you, at least, has shone 'the light that ne'er can shine again on life's dull stream.'"

"Margaret," I said in a low, earnest tone, "it is only now that that light is shining for me,—only now that the odor is being 'shed,' which I do not agree with the poet is '*fled*' as soon as shed." I tell you, believe it or not, that 'Love's Young Dream' is charming my senses now, and that mind and heart, will, memory and all are under its charmed influence. Do you know that I had a debate with myself before I came down stairs this morning?"

"Indeed; and what, pray, was the subject under discussion?"

"I was debating with myself whether or not I should present a certain fair lady of my acquaintance with a bouquet. I once before did, and she carelessly threw it aside as a worthless thing, though the flowers were the fairest of Flora's children."

"Well! then, I would not advise you to present any more *bouquets* in the same quarter," said Margaret; "the lady has, I fear, no taste for flowers."

"On the contrary, she is, I know, a great lover of them."

Margaret shook her head with a look of comical bewilderment, "Well I know one lady," she said,

"who will graciously receive and highly appreciate such an offering. There's Aunt Ella, although she cannot see them, she has a perfect passion for flowers."

"I wish I could know what became of my primroses," I said, in a way that made Margaret laugh.

"What primroses do you mean?" she asked very simply.

"Why, the primroses I gathered and presented to a young lady on the first day of this month before the dew was off the grass. There were daisies, too,—

"Veritable mountain-daisies," said Margaret, "the

"Wee modest, crimson-tipp'd flower"—

sung by 'Auld Scotia's bard.' Ah! surely the young lady you speak of could not have treated with cold neglect so fair an offering of spring's first flowers! If she did, I pity her want of taste and feeling!—But, dear me, Mr. Howard, there is Uncle Maurice coming down, and I should have been up long ago to dress Aunt Ella. Pray excuse me!" and off she flew on the wings of love and duty.

When she was gone I seemed to have lost the desire of walking. Mr. Fitzgerald joined me in the parlor, and we stood chatting a few moments, admiring the exceeding beauty of the morning. Then the old gentleman, saying he had some directions to give to the men, left me alone. While walking to and fro, thinking of the subject nearest my heart, my eyes fell on what I knew to be Margaret's sketch-book lying on a table in one corner of the spacious apart-

ment. Taking it to a window, I sat down and began turning over the leaves. There were many beautiful sketches of scenes in the neighborhood; with pleasure I recognised the "mountain solitude," and a half-finished drawing of the scene around the pillar-stone on the heights above. But one there was that made my heart beat quick, and brought the hot blood to my cheek and brow. It was an exquisitely-finished drawing of a bunch of flowers—*primroses and daisies*—and pressed between the leaves of the book lay nestling the half-withered petals of the originals, still exhaling a faint sweet perfume—like the good odour of a well-spent life. Long I gazed on the drawing and the withered flowers, and

"A flood of thought came o'er me,
That fill'd my eyes with tears."

Cautiously and carefully I closed the book, and was just replacing it on the table when Margaret entered the room, her aunt leaning on her arm.

Whilst Miss Fitzgerald and I exchanged salutations, Margaret's quick eye had noticed me laying down her sketch-book, and I saw that she changed color.

"So you have been looking at my poor attempts in drawing," she said with a forced smile, and a degree of embarrassment strange and unusual in one so self-possessed and so self-reliant.

"Yes," I replied, "I was so fortunate as to find your sketch-book just when I had given up the notion of going out, and I found it more interesting

even than I expected. Apart from the grace and delicacy of the drawings, and their fine artistic finish, I saw in many of the landscapes, as it were, old familiar friends."

"I dare say you did," she observed in her usual tone, "I believe my 'summer retreat' is there,—and that wild, lovely scene at the pillar-stone. You saw those, did you not?"

"Yes, and I saw what pleased me most of all, a bunch of wild flowers—primroses and daisies!"

Margaret's face was crimson in a moment, but she smiled and said in a careless way—"I am glad you liked that sketch, Mr. Howard! they are the first flowers I have drawn for a long time."

"And you drew them from nature," I said pointedly.

"Of course I did—I always do."

"So now I know what became of my *bouquet*," I said, "for you will not deny that that was mine?"

"Deny it?" she said, almost indignantly. "Why should I deny it, Mr. Howard? I thought your flowers would make a pretty sketch, so I kept them for the purpose. But I thought Uncle Maurice was here, and breakfast is ready."

She hurried away on pretence of seeking her uncle, but I could see that she was glad of the opportunity to escape from the room. For me, this incident had opened up a new world; the light of hope began to dawn upon me, and the pulses of my heart were stirred with a new life.

All that day Margaret avoided meeting my glance, and, much as I desired it, I could not find her a moment alone. She was the busiest of mortals, beyond all doubt. Once, towards evening, while I sat on the rustic bench outside the door, chatting with little Peter, who was conning his A B C, sitting on the grass at my feet, Margaret stopped a moment as she passed, and smiling, asked, "What would your fashionable London friends think if they saw you now, Mr. Howard?"

"They would probably envy me even a brief season of such quiet as reigns around me here. Unfortunately, I cannot long enjoy it."

"Are you going to leave us, then?"

"Undoubtedly I am. For reasons not unknown to you, Miss Fitzgerald, I cannot prolong my stay."

"Is the gentleman goin' away, Miss?" said Peter, suddenly raising his eyes from his book, and addressing himself to Margaret.

"So it appears, Peter!" was her calm reply.

"What makes him go?" persisted Peter. "Why can't he stay? I don't want him to go."

"But others do," I said, in a voice that could only reach Margaret's ear.

"What an idea you have of the hospitality of Kilorgan!" said Margaret, very composedly. "Scant it now is, I grant you, but none the less warm and sincere." And away she went, leaving me to meditate at leisure on that greatest of all puzzles, a woman's heart.

So engrossed was I with the trouble and anxiety of my own mind, that I forgot all about the stories of the Geraldines, and when Mr. Fitzgerald first commenced his recital that evening, I could scarcely listen with any degree of interest. As he proceeded in his story, however, I gradually lost sight of my troubles in the overwhelming sorrows and tribulations of the last Catholic Geraldines.

"I told you," said Mr. Fitzgerald, "how Lord James of Desmond suffered martyrdom for the Faith, ere he had arrived at the age of manhood. You may easily imagine how the cruel death of their noble brother fired the souls of Earl Desmond and his brother John with tenfold ardor in the cause for which his young life had been so freely offered up, animating them with still increased fury against the ruthless enemy of their race, their country, and their religion. All that brave men could do, they did, both at home and abroad, to sustain the cause of Ireland and Catholicity. Sundry efforts were made, it is true, to send them help from the Continent, but little aid or comfort they derived from all the efforts of their friends abroad. Meanwhile Elizabeth, becoming seriously alarmed, sent the Marquis of Ormond, the hereditary foe of the Geraldines, and a staunch Protestant, at the head of a large force, to oppose the Earl of Desmond and the insurgent Catholics. Hearing of this, King Philip of Spain sent eight hundred choice men to Desmond's assistance. These foreigners, commanded by Stephen

San José, landed on the coast of Kerry, and fortified themselves in a strong position, their fortress being called the Golden Fort. Immediately, Grey, the Viceroy of that day, marched against them, being joined by Ormond and the forces under his command.

"They invested the Kerry fortress by sea and land, but the garrison was so strong, and so well provided with stores of every kind, that, although a constant fire was kept up on it for forty days, the besiegers seemed as far from taking it as they were the first day. In fact, the enemy was on the point of raising the siege, but resolved to make a last effort to gain by intrigue what he could not gain in fair and open fight. The Viceroy sent a flag of truce to demand a parley. The Spanish commander seemed willing to consent, but an Irish gentleman named Plunket, who was in the garrison, and had probably come from Spain with the Spanish troops, earnestly besought San José to make no terms with the false and faithless English heretics, protesting that he, for one, would never consent to any such shameful proceeding, especially as the garrison were well able to hold out for some time longer. But the haughty Spaniard, being, of course, the chief in command, ordered Plunket to say no more on the subject, and to accompany him to the quarters of the English general as interpreter.

"With a heavy heart Plunket obeyed, thinking it might be better for him to go than some one of

less intelligence, and less honestly devoted to the Catholic and Irish cause. Nothing could exceed the courtesy with which they were received by the English commander, and nothing could be more generous or honorable than his proposals. In fact, he was willing to grant all that San José asked, and more, too, so rejoiced he was to get possession of the fortress as good winter quarters for his troops. But Plunket, having no faith in his promises, and knowing the importance of the fortress, bethought him of an expedient. He interpreted Grey's words in the very opposite sense, and told San José that the Englishman would be satisfied with nothing less than an unconditional surrender. This audacity astonished the Spaniard, knowing the strength of the fortress, and how well able it was to hold out for even a long time. He desired Plunket to say so, but Plunket, as before, changed the meaning of the words, and told the Viceroy that the Spaniard would never consent to give up the fortress, and that it was only sacrificing his men to remain any longer before it. But whilst Plunket said this, the astute Englishman, closely watching the expression of his face, and seeing the Spaniard loftily indignant, began to suspect that Plunket was playing them false. Another interpreter was procured, an explanation followed, and the infatuated Spaniard ordered the faithful Irishman to be seized, bound hand and foot, and thrown into prison.

"Then San José returned to the fort to inform

his officers and men that, finding it useless to hold out longer, he had resolved to save the lives of all by surrendering on favorable terms. Plunket, in his prison, hearing this, sent to warn the garrison that there was treachery at work, and that their lives were not worth an hour's purchase if they yielded up the fortress. He told them that the hopes of the Catholics depended on their holding out; that the inclemency of the season would soon compel the Viceroy to raise the siege, and that the Geraldines were hastening to their relief with strong reinforcements. Some of the highest of the Spanish officers were of the same opinion as Plunket, but the soldiers were only too willing to get rid of the fortress on favorable terms, and, therefore, took sides with their commander."

"Talk of Spanish honor after that!" said Margaret, with a burning glow upon her cheek. "Hopeful auxiliaries those were for the gallant and devoted Irish Catholics!"

"Well! my dear," said her uncle, "let us not be too hard on them. They paid dear for their infatuated folly. No sooner was the noble fortress given up to the English Viceroy than he caused every soul in the garrison to be put to death, with two exceptions; these were San José himself, who was scornfully driven out of the country, and the too-faithful Plunket, who was reserved for a death of torture. A little while after his bones were broken with a hammer until he was dead. Oh! surely, if there be a

God in heaven, a terrible vengeance will one day come on a nation whose dominion is upheld by such perfidy and cruelty. But this is a sort of digression.

"When Earl Desmond and his brother heard of the tragic fate of the Spanish garrison whom they were hastening to succor, their hearts were filled with sorrow, while their blood boiled with indignation at this new proof of English perfidy. John, being the acting commander-in-chief, rallied all the force he could, and prepared for the terrible struggle which he knew must follow.

"He was not mistaken; tidings were soon brought him that the English were advancing, and without delay the brave Geraldine led his men to meet them. At Gortnabrid, here in the county Limerick, the two armies came in sight of each other, and both prepared for action. Dr Saunders, Lord John's chaplain, then raised his voice and told the Catholics to advance in God's name, and do battle for their country and their faith. 'I myself,' said he, 'will pray for you like Moses, with outstretched arms, that God may not abandon you to the fury of the enemy, but crown your efforts with a glorious victory. And I will never leave the spot,' said he, 'if victory does not rest on John Desmond's banner.' Encouraged by these words, the Geraldine soldiers could no longer be restrained; they rushed upon the enemy, and for several hours the battle raged with unabated fury. John was every where seen in the thickest of the fight; as the annalists tell he was this

moment a general, the next a common soldier; his voice rang like a trumpet over the din of battle, cheering and encouraging his men, and he showed himself a true hero, a worthy son of the Geraldines. The English cavalry broke and fled early in the action, and the infantry were nearly all slain. Their guns and banners remained in the hands of the victorious Catholics. This was a glorious victory, and it was followed by another a few days after, on which occasion the Geraldines sustained a heavy loss in the death of Thomas Fitzgerald, eldest son of John, a most gallant youth. In this last battle the English were assisted by some Irish auxiliaries, amongst others, two sons of the Earl of Clanrickarde, Lords John and Ulick Burke, ever on the side of their country's enemies.

"Another grand victory was gained by the Earl and his brother over the Queen's troops near Kilmallock. Of this battle the Irish chroniclers give a most lively and graphic description. 'Wild and impetuous,' they say, 'was the charge of the Geraldines — steady and unbroken was the marshalled array of the English horsemen.' The conflict lasted for three hours, at which time the royal troops were forced to take shelter within the strong walls of Kilmallock, which town the English had taken from the Earl of Desmond, its lawful owner.* Over and

* The gallant Fitz Maurice took Kilmallock from the English in 1568, but four years after it was re-captured by Sir John Perrot, Lord President of Munster.

above these signal victories gained by the brave Geraldines in pitched battle, John Desmond is said to have made no less than three hundred successful raids into the English territory, carrying fire and sword wherever he went. Truly those were glorious days for the Desmond Geraldines, and their memory stirs my old heart to-day like the sound of a battle-trump. There was every appearance that the Catholic cause was about to prevail, and the persecuting propagandists of the new religion trembled for the power they had so relentlessly exercised over those who adhered to the ancient faith. And if John Desmond had lived only a little longer, his efforts crowned with the same success, there is little doubt but the Catholic princes of Europe would have stepped in and completed the work of Irish independence so successfully inaugurated by that able captain who had, under so many difficulties, achieved so much. But alas! alas! for the shattered columns of human fame that stud the face of history! just when his glory was at the highest, he was cut off by treachery, like so many others of Ireland's best and bravest. This was how it happened, and a sad story it is to tell:

"Sir John Fitzgerald had occasion to go into the county Cork, where at a place called Castle O'Lehan, now Castle Lyons, he was to meet the son and heir of Lord Barry and some other Catholic chiefs, with his own kinsman the Seneschal of Imokilly. As he was only to be accompanied by a small

escort, a traitor sent word of the proposed journey to Zouch, the English commander in those parts, who gladly availed himself of the opportunity to get the Catholic leader into his power. Going out from Cork with a strong force, he stationed himself in a bush on the way by which Sir John was expected to pass. On came the unsuspecting chieftain, accompanied only by his cousin James Fitz-John Fitzgerald, the heir of Strancally,† and seven horsemen. All at once the English made their appearance, and at first Sir John was nowise alarmed, and had alighted from his horse, supposing them to be David Barry's soldiers. But his cousin quickly perceiving the mistake, told Sir John, and urged him to fly into a neighboring wood. But strange to relate, a sudden torpor came over him, so that he lost all presence of mind and all strength of body. He could not even mount his horse, and the animal, of which he was wont to have perfect control, now became wholly unmanageable. Meanwhile the English were rapidly approaching, and John of Desmond, seeing that it was impossible for himself to escape, besought his cousin and the few soldiers who were with him to save themselves by flight. 'Depart now, my brave companions,' said he, 'for I cannot mount. I feel myself deprived of all strength, and know that the hour of my death is at hand.' The seven soldiers immediately rode away at full speed, but Fitzgerald of Strancally refused to leave him to die alone. His

† Strancally was one of the principal strongholds of the Desmonds.

words were very touching. 'I will never abandon you, my glorious chief,' said he, 'under whom I have so often been led to victory against those heretic dogs. I will not leave you to perish alone, you who have so often led me triumphantly through hosts of foemen! now, if necessary, will I follow you to the death!' They were immediately surrounded by the English soldiers, and Zouch was about to make them prisoners when a traitor named Thomas Fleming, who was said to have been once a servant of Sir John's, plunged a spear into his throat; no sooner was the weapon withdrawn than the noble Geraldine yielded up his spirit, being only able to say, 'I die for the Catholic faith—oh, God! have mercy on my soul.' His head was then cut off by the cowardly murderers who had so often fled before his conquering arm; it was sent to Dublin, an acceptable offering, no doubt, and spiked in front of the Castle; his body, we are told, was taken to Cork, and hung in chains at one of the city gates, where for three years it hung, a striking monument of English clemency and magnanimity, until it was at length blown into the sea one stormy night."

Here the narrator paused, overcome with emotion, in which we all shared more or less, for the silence was not broken till Uncle Maurice, clearing his voice, resumed: "The brave young Geraldine who accompanied Sir John had escaped in the confusion following his death, and might easily have escaped from the country, but he could not bear to desert his

friends and co-religionists in their hour of need. He accordingly remained, and lent what aid he could to the cause he loved, but was subsequently taken prisoner, and is said to have been executed in Cork." The old man was again silent.

"What a tragic story is that of these Munster Geraldines," I said; "how strangely it contrasts with those of Leinster!"

"But their tribulations, you will observe," said Margaret, "dated only from the beginning of the Protestant persecution. Prior to that their career was fully as prosperous as that of the Kildare branch. And even during their protracted struggle against English tyranny and injustice, they gained, you see, great glory, and showed themselves possessed of great wealth and power,—else how could they battle so long and so successfully with the great Elizabeth at the height of her power?—but are you going to tell any more to-night, Uncle Maurice? If you are not too much fatigued, you might as well finish the sad story of the last Geraldine that ruled in Desmond."

"Yes, Margaret, the sooner a sorrowful tale is told the better for the hearers. So I will resume my narrative.

"When Earl Garret heard of the fall of his valiant brother John, instead of being overwhelmed by the disastrous tidings, he buckled on his armor, determined to take command in person of the Catholic army, now that he alone was left. In vain did his wife try to dissuade him from taking such a perilous

step. The bleeding ghosts of his murdered relations, his noble brothers and his heroic kinsmen seemed to beckon him on to fight as they had fought, for the cause of truth and justice, and now that he alone was left of the Catholic chieftains of his race, he was seized with a holy ardor to do or die in defence of the faith. One heroic kinsman was still left him as devoted as he was to faith and country ; this was Sir Maurice Fitzgerald, a gallant knight, who long after the ruin of the Catholic cause in Ireland, served with distinction in the service of Spain. On him, as a more experienced soldier, the Earl conferred the supreme command, acting himself in a subordinate capacity. Was not this true devotion, true magnanimity ?—oh ! that Ireland had such men to-day as those Geraldines of Elizabeth's time !

“ For three whole years, did these noble chieftains carry on the war, during which time they gained many a signal victory, but were often defeated in their turn by English officers, amongst whom was the then celebrated Sir Walter Raleigh, the darling of romance, but, like the poet Spencer, a foe and spoiler of the Irish race. Strange to say that amongst the Irish auxiliaries of the English was then serving in the Queen's army, against his persecuted countrymen and co-religionists, Hugh O'Neill, afterwards Earl of Tyrone, one of the greatest leaders the Irish nation has ever had at any period of its chequered history ! But against all odds, and in despite of all obstacles, the Earl and Sir Maurice kept the Desmond banner afloat and

on many a hard-fought field, made their enemies quail before their well known cry of 'Shannid aboo !'

"At length Elizabeth, seeing that the end of the contest was apparently as far off as ever, commissioned her deputies in Ireland to propose to the Earl of Desmond peace and pardon, on condition that he would deliver up to her Dr. Saunders, the Pope's Nuncio, and the Earl's chaplain, who being an Englishman, was her liege subject born. The Earl's reply was worthy of himself and his lineage, although his resources were becoming exhausted, and his little army sadly weakened by the long and terrible strife. 'Tell the Queen,' said he, 'that, though my friends should desert my standard, and a price be set on my head because of this refusal, I will never betray this reverend gentleman into her hands.'

"The Geraldines then marched into Tipperary on a foraging expedition. While there they fought a battle with the English, the details of which prove them to have been excellent tacticians. The Earl and Sir Maurice, placed five hundred musqueteers in ambush amongst the brushwood that covered the place of their encampment, whilst their mailed infantry they posted on the neighboring heights. The English, suspecting no ambuscade, marched on, and were attacked on all sides by the Irish before they were aware of their danger. The consequence was that they were nearly all cut off, and the few who remained were taken prisoners by the Geraldines.

"Then the Desmond forces marched towards

Cashel, nearing which the Butlers of Ormond and other friends of the English dominion mustered their strength to oppose them. When the rival hosts came together in mortal conflict, the Geraldines at first seemed likely to have the worst of the battle, but owing to the valor and coolness of the Seneschal of Immokilly, who commanded on Desmond's left, the scale of victory was turned, and after a fierce contest of several hours' duration, the enemy fled towards the Suir River, closely pursued by the victorious Geraldines. Many perished in the swollen waters, and the rest fled to the hills. These were glorious victories, but alas! they were the last that crowned the efforts of the Geraldines. Desmond's resources were now exhausted; his army wasted with war and its manifold hardships and privations, but even then his brave spirit would not yield to despondency. He addressed his soldiers* in a strain of fervid eloquence exhorting them to hold out yet a little longer, in hopes that heaven would send them the succor they so sorely needed. He then sent deputations to all the great Catholic lords and chiefs, urging them to unite in one final effort against the English. But their hearts were not like his heart, and they would not peril their lives and fortunes by embarking in a cause which they deemed hopeless. So the Earl was left to his own resources, and soon the end came. Dr. Saunders died, happily for himself, before the ruin of Desmond was consummated.

* For the Earl's address to his men, see Appendix

"In swift succession, all the great strongholds of the Desmonds were taken by the English, as Kilmallock had long before been; Adare, Castleconnell, Strancally, Shannid, and even Askeaton, where was the burial place of the family, were each in turn, taken and pillaged, until the aged nobleman was obliged to keep his Christmas in a wood, where being one night surprised in the hut where he was, he and his Countess escaping into the darkness, saved their lives by standing up to their chins in water till the pursuit was over.

"It was the Earl's hope to escape to Spain, whither he had persuaded Sir Maurice to betake himself. But he was too closely watched, and after wandering in the Kerry mountains with his wife and a few faithful followers for many a weary day and night, he was cruelly murdered by a certain Daniel O'Kelly, a soldier, who in return for the head of the princely Desmond received from the Queen lands to the value of thirty pounds a year.

The gentle Elizabeth would not be satisfied till she had the Earl's head brought to London and impaled in an iron cage in the Tower, where the grisly trophy was long shown to visitors.

So fell the Earl of Desmond, and with him the hopes of the Irish Catholics for many a long and dismal year. His death gave into the hands of Elizabeth and her cormorants, 575,000 acres of land, some of it the richest in Ireland!—Many a family, rich and noble now, owes its wealth and honors to the parcelling out,

amongst needy adventurers, of the vast possessions of the Earl of Desmond. After his tragic death, his faithful kinsmen all fled to the Continent, where they dragged out the sorrowful remnant of their days. And as for Ireland and her Catholic people, amongst the darkest days of her sad history were those which followed the ruin and death of Desmond."

Uncle Maurice ceased and so saddened were we all by the mournful fate of these heroic chieftains, that few words were spoken till we separated for the night.



CHAPTER XX.

AFTER breakfast next day I provided myself with a book—Cowper's Poems I think it was—and sallied forth for a long ramble. But when I got as far as the pillar-stone on the heights, I stopped to admire the changed aspect of the scene, now that the mild sun of May was shedding its softened glory over the hills and vales, making even the craggy rocks to smile; I was tempted to linger long, and at length gave up the idea of going farther. So I sat down with my book and my own thoughts to "chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy." So the fair, bright hours passed while I dreamily pored over the charmed page, the graceful reveries of a poet's fancy, at times laying down my book to think of Margaret as the presiding genius of the tranquil home-scenes, the fire-side joys, which none better than William Cowper knows how to describe. But all at once the warm glow faded from mind and heart, as came the darkening thought—"Margaret has refused to share my home—without her what will home be?" Absorbed in the gloomy thoughts to which this idea gave rise, I heeded not the flight of time, and sat, with my elbow resting on my knee, and the hand that supported my head shading my eyes.

I know not how long I had thus sat when a hand was laid lightly on my shoulder, and a voice that went through my whole being, like a perfume from Araby the Blest to the fainting traveller in the desert, pronounced my name. Starting to my feet, I saw Margaret Fitzgerald regarding me with such a smile as I had never seen on her face before—tender, sweet and playful.

I felt as one in a dream, but a dream from which I would never wish to be awakened. "Miss Fitzgerald," I said, "you here!—how little I anticipated such a pleasure!"

"Possibly not," she replied with her sweet, arch smile, "and I scarcely know how I came to be here."

"Are you alone?" I said in a half abstracted way. Her appearance there at an hour when I knew she was usually busily engaged at home was something I could not understand.

"Not exactly," she said, pointing to Sheelah and Peter, who, to my astonishment, were engaged at a little distance spreading a cloth on the soft, green sward—in the shade of an overhanging rock. "Uncle Maurice and Aunt Ella are coming too, but I hurried on before them. We are going to dine here."

"Indeed?" I said in a half conscious way. "But did you know I was here?"

"Of course I did—I guessed you would, so I sent Peter to ascertain, and—here we are. Are you glad or sorry—say which?"

"Your presence always makes me glad, Miss Fitzgerald!" I said, still abstractedly, for there was something in her manner that puzzled me exceedingly.

"Miss Fitzgerald!" she repeated, with a toss of her head, "I will not have you call me so any more, Edward Howard!—you called me Margaret the other day, and I thought I never liked my name so well."

A thrill of joy ran through my frame; I could scarcely credit the evidence of my senses, and feared it might be a dream. I looked in Margaret's face, I took her hand in mine, and she did not withdraw it. "Then, it is not a dream," I said, "for this dear hand is flesh and blood."

"Of course it is, and I am Margaret Fitzgerald her very self, and you are Edward Howard, the husband of Nina Ellersley that was to be——"

"But the husband of Margaret Fitzgerald that is to be! Is it not so, Margaret?"

"If you will have it so," she said very demurely, and I had barely time to raise her hand to my lips; she gently withdrew it, and moved some paces back. Then looking at me with that provoking smile of hers, she added—"Now tell the truth, Edward, are you not speculating on the probability of my having lost my senses since you left the house?"

"Not exactly that," I laughingly replied, "but it does seem to me that some kind fairy, pitying my desponding state, has been weaving bright spells for me—casting a glamour over some one I know."

"Don't flatter yourself, then, with any such ideas;

the change you see in me is all owing to a certain letter Uncle Maurice received to-day, announcing that a rich old bachelor cousin of ours lately died in India, where he has been many years in the Company's service, and has left ten thousand pounds to me. So if I was poor this evening, I am rich now."

"And so?"——

"And so—you are a great deal duller than I ever thought you if you need any further information?"

I did not, and Margaret saw it. She nodded and smiled, then held out her hand, saying—"Let us shake hands now and be friends for evermore."

"Until death shall us part," I added softly, as I took the little white hand and bent over it a moment. Just then Mr. Fitzgerald and his sister came in sight, and Margaret hurried away to speed the preparations for our cold dinner. I went forward to meet the old lady and gentleman. We three sat together on a green mossy bank till little Peter was sent to announce dinner. By that time all was satisfactorily arranged; I had the happiness of hearing from the uncle and aunt of Margaret, that could they have chosen a husband for her from all the world, their choice would have fallen on me. Before we returned to the house that evening the wedding-day was appointed, and the golden gates of a happy future opened before me. And Margaret, with her sweet, womanly frankness, made no effort to conceal the brightness of her happy spirit. Like the clear depths of some sunlit lake, you saw down, down into

her pure and joyous heart, a beautiful sight for me—who had never before seen her except under a cloud of care and sorrow.

“One thing only troubles me now,” she said, as we walked together a little in advance of her uncle and aunt.

“And what is that?”

“That dear old Kilorgan is lost to us—and to think that if the sale had been delayed only a few months, this legacy would have enabled us to keep it. How strangely things do happen at times in this world of ours!”

“Very strangely, indeed!—now, if it were my cousin Edmund you were marrying, instead of me, you would be mistress of Kilorgan once again.”

“But I told you before that much as I regret its being sold, I would not redeem the old place on any such terms. Were you the owner instead of your cousin, I should have kept my heart closed against you.”

“How thankful I am, then,” I gravely replied, “that I am *not* the owner of Kilorgan!”

Margaret smiled, and pointed to the first star of evening where it glittered above the crest of a tall mountain.

“Does not that remind you,” she said, “of the gallant Claverhouse, the hero of Scottish romance, the ‘bonnie Dundee’ of Scottish song, and the words he is said to have spoken to his men before the fatal fight of Killiecrankie :

"Soldiers! I have sworn a vow
Ere the evening star shall glisten
On Schehallion's lofty brow,
Either we shall rest in triumph,
Or another of the Græmes
Shall have died in battle harness,
For his country and King James!"

"Yes, one cannot help thinking of the words and their sad fulfilment," I replied, "with the mountain and the stars before us as now."

And the evening star was shining
On Schehallion's distant head,
When we wiped our bloody broadswords,
And return'd to count the dead.
There we found him, gash'd and gory,
Stretch'd upon the cumber'd plain,
As he told us where to seek him
In the thickest of the slain.'

"Talking of the Græmes and their loyal devotion to Scotland, reminds me of your own Fitzgeralds, and their self-sacrificing devotion to Ireland. The fate of those last Geraldines, of whom your uncle has been telling me, bears a mournful similitude to that of the gallant Græmes, Montrose and Dundee, and others of the name, who freely offered up their lives for their country and their lawful king. When Montrose had expiated the crime of loyalty on the scaffold, how eagerly his cousin, Dundee, stepped into the place made vacant by his death, and thrust himself into the deadly breach. It is just the story of James Fitzmaurice and John of Desmond, and the

Earl—as one fell, the other sprang forward to seize the falling banner.”

“But there is this difference,” said Margaret, “that while the truly gallant Græmes and the other loyal clans of Scotland, fought merely for king and country, the Geraldines, whilst loyally devoted to their country, had the higher additional motive of *faith*. Hence it is, that they have been called the Macca-bees of Ireland. That proud title, of course, refers to the Desmond branch, from whom I am prouder of being descended than if the blood of a hundred kings flowed in my veins.”

If I had not loved Margaret Fitzgerald before, I would have loved her then for the noble enthusiasm that raised her so far above mere ordinary mortals, that spoke in her voice, and shone in her eyes, and made her cheek glow with yet warmer tints than those of her fresh fair womanhood.

It was joy to think that I had won so rich a treasure as that high and noble heart, and I longed for the hour that would make her mine for evermore.

The preliminaries, few and simple, were arranged that evening, I purposely avoiding any mention of settlements, for reasons known to myself but which I did not care to make known to others.

It was later than usual when prayers were said and our little circle gathered, as usual, round the fire which the chilly evenings of spring still made welcome. Then Uncle Maurice continued the history of the Munster Geraldines :

"That Sir Maurice Fitzgerald," said he, "whom I mentioned as one of the last and truest of the Earl's friends, is probably the same whose death in Flanders, gave rise to the poem you may remember Margaret recited one evening. Others of the family went abroad after the Earl's death and the utter ruin of the cause, and we get glimpses of them here and there, now at one Court, now at another, endeavoring to procure aid for their suffering countrymen and brethren in the faith. Of these, the last remaining son of John of Desmond is most highly praised for fine and noble qualities and for steadfast devotion to the cause. His adventures were well worth telling had I only time, but as it is now late I must curtail somewhat. Suffice it to say that he was educated and maintained by the Cardinal of Sienna, in Rome, till he came to man's estate, and that he was very accomplished, speaking several languages with fluency. He embarked in the Spanish Armada sent by King Phillip for the relief of Ireland, and being cast on the Scottish coast with some hundreds of Spaniards when the mighty fleet was dispersed by the storm, his eloquent intercession saved them from being thrown into prison. Queen Elizabeth, hearing that he was in Scotland, sent to demand that he should be given up as her subject, but the King of Scotland privately sent him word of the danger to which he was exposed, and in the darkness of night he escaped, and arrived safely in Spain.

"A little before that time, when King Philip had sent a smaller expedition to Ireland, young Gerald, the last of Fitzmaurice's sons, had embarked with his friend Thomas Granville, who you may remember was so devoted to himself and his brother Maurice, and when the latter died, attached himself exclusively to Gerald. Unfortunately that fleet, too, was scattered by the stormy winds and the ships dashed on the rocky western coast of Ireland, where several went to pieces. Amongst those who perished were Gerald and his friend. The vice admiral's ship being driven ashore, the natives assembled in crowds on the beach, asking who the strangers were. Being told that they were part of the Spanish fleet, the people cried out—'Where, then, is the Geraldine?'—'Alas, he has perished in the storm.' Loud and piercing was the wail of the multitude on hearing this news. 'Go, go,' said they; 'since you have lost Gerald, we want you not.' And they would not allow the Spaniards to land. So identified, you see, were all their hopes with the Desmond family.

"One branch of that great house still remained standing amid the general ruin. You remember my telling you that the late Earl had a half-brother, Thomas the Red, who had at first laid claim to the Earldom; but when his claim was set aside in favor of Gerald, he had ever after remained quietly in his castle, taking no part in the troubles that followed. When he died he left two sons, James and John, both of whom were animated by a burn-

ing desire to avenge the sufferings and death of their uncles, the Earl and his brothers, and to recover, if possible, from the hands of the English 'undertakers' amongst whom they had been parcelled out, the princely domains of Desmond. It is true that the late Earl had left one son, James Fitz Garrett, but he having been brought up at the court of Elizabeth, where his mother had sent him as a hostage in his early childhood, in the vain hope of saving her husband's life,—little was expected from him by the faithful adherents of his house.

"By this time the great Irish chiefs were up in arms for faith and country. Hugh O'Neil, the able and politic Earl of Tyrone, had formed, or was forming, his great national league, and with Hugh Roe O'Donnell as his main ally, had already given the Queen's forces some hard fighting. O'Neil, well knowing the vast importance of raising up again the fallen house of Desmond, encouraged James Fitz Thomas to assume the title of Earl of Desmond, and to raise the standard of revolt; which being done, the followers of his house rallied in crowds around his banner. As the son of the late Earl was known to be living, James was never recognized by either party as the lawful possessor of the title which he had assumed; he, therefore, received the name by which he is known in the histories of the time, the *Sugar* Earl of Desmond. He proved himself, however, a brave and skilful leader, and for some time did good service to the

Catholic cause in the South, in connection with a far greater man, Florence McCarthy, a wily and politic man, an able diplomatist, a skilful tactician, having, as the English officials of the day were wont to write, 'as many wiles as a fox,' and, moreover, 'hovering over them like a dark cloud.' Being joined by some other Southern chiefs, they made such progress against the English in that part of the country, that Queen Elizabeth, becoming alarmed, strove to sow dissension in their camp. All at once a rumor spread that the real Earl of Desmond, James Fitz Garret, was coming over from England to take possession of some, at least, of the territories of his house, restored to him, together with the title, by the Queen's clemency.

"The *ruse* was at first successful. The whole Desmond country was thrown into wild excitement by the news. The young Earl landed at Youghal, and thence proceeded to Kilmallock, his journey one continuous triumph. The hill-sides swarmed with people, all eager to get sight of the young lord who was to take at once the front rank in the national cause, and to renew in his own proper person, the departed glories of the heroic Desmonds.

"It was amidst shouts of welcome and thunders of applause that the young Earl entered his ancient castle at Kilmallock. Cries of '*Cead mille failte*' rent the air, and awoke the long silent echoes of the castle, and hopes and hearts beat high as the wine went round, and the minstrels struck their harps to

the praise of the martyr-heroes of Desmond. But this lasted no longer than the following Sunday. When that hallowed day came round, you may imagine the horror and disgust of the faithful retainers, many of whom had served all through the late Geraldine wars, when they saw the son of Earl Garrett go to the Protestant place of worship. With shame and sorrow did the chief men amongst them endeavor to dissuade the Earl from so outraging the feelings of his father's faithful followers; the young man was a staunch Protestant, and was proud to show that he belonged to the newer and more favored religion. Then did the people, who only a few days before had showered wheat and salt upon him as he passed to his ancestral halls, in token of the prosperity they wished him, spit upon him and cry shame, saying that then, indeed, the glory of Desmond was departed. From that hour the men of Desmond all deserted the young Earl, and it was with reluctance that any of his retainers would render him the smallest service. Influence he had none, and during the short time he remained in Ireland he was held of no more account than the poorest peasant in all Munster. Lonely and dejected he lived, shunned by all the Catholics; even his own kindred kept aloof from him, and the cold contempt with which he was regarded by both parties, chafed his proud spirit so that he could not bear to remain in Ireland. When he sailed for England (where he soon died) the people said it

was a good riddance, and his very existence was soon forgotten."

"It must, at least, have been a good riddance for the Sугan Earl," I observed.

"Ah! poor James Fitz Thomas!" said Uncle Maurice, compassionately. "His fortunes were by that time past redemption. The Queen's stratagem had entirely succeeded. The arrival in the country of the late Earl's son had, as Elizabeth expected, entirely destroyed the influence of the Sугan Earl, and from that hour his ruin dated. He was gradually deserted by his followers, who, although they would not serve a Protestant Earl of Desmond, would not follow the lead of one who had no valid claim to the title. After struggling gallantly for a while against the rushing tide of ruin, he was at length betrayed by the White Knight, himself an unworthy scion of the Geraldine stock,* captured in a cave where he had taken refuge with a few faithful followers, and sent a prisoner to the Lord President, into whose hands Florence McCarthy fell about the same time. They were both sent to the Tower of London, where, after long years of imprisonment, James Fitz Thomas died.

* The tomb of the White Knight, in the ruined aisle of one of the Abbey churches of Kilmallock, is still regarded with horror and disgust by the surrounding peasantry. It is cracked through, and in a hollow of it, formed by the rains of ages, water is always found. These circumstances are connected in the popular mind with the dark and evil character of the unworthy Geraldine who sleeps beneath—the White Knight, who betrayed the Sугan Earl.

"Elizabeth having accomplished the purpose for which she had sent the young Earl to Ireland, and finding that, owing to his being a Protestant, he had no influence whatever, took no further notice of him, and when he died in London, not long after his return from Ireland, strong suspicions were entertained that he had been poisoned. He had enjoyed the Earldom but one year. He may be considered the last Earl of Desmond. The next heir to the title was recognized as such abroad, and received a pension from the King of Spain; he served with some distinction in the Austrian army, and ended his short career in a manner worthy of his name and lineage. He suffered to die of starvation rather than give up a fortified town of which he was appointed governor. So ended the long line of the Geraldines of Desmond, of all the Anglo-Irish families the most identified with the Celtic Irish, the most devoted to the ancient faith after a new religion was introduced, and for these reasons the most fondly remembered amongst the people. Many of the wildest and most romantic legends of the people of South Munster, especially in the mountain regions of Kerry and Limerick, are of the Desmonds, whose mouldering castles stud the face of four counties.

"Amongst these traditions one of the wildest and most beautiful, as it is one of the most significant, is that which tells of Gerald—the last of the Earls—the '*Garrett Erla*' of the peasantry,—him whose head was cut off in a mountain cabin by a vile hireling soldier

bleached in the sun of many a summer over a turret of the Tower of London—sad memento of the terrible vengeance of 'the Virgin Queen!'—enchanted with his warrior knights in a cavern under one of his castles, encircled by the wild lone waters of Lough Gur. Every seventh year Garrett Erla is seen, so says the legend, on some moonlight night of summer, mounted on his charger, gliding over the shining surface of the lone mountain-lake; and the story goes that when the silver shoes of the war-horse are worn out, Garrett Erla's enchantment will cease, and he shall live again in the splendor of his earlier years, before he had lost all for the Faith."

"It is not surprising," I said, after a short pause "that the Irish peasantry, so imaginative, so poetical, so fondly attached to the old families, and, above all, so devoted to their religion, should love and cherish the memory of the great Desmonds, whose daring feats of valor, and the princely splendor of their state, are a proud theme for tale and song."

"But you forgot, Uncle Maurice," said Margaret, "to tell Mr. Howard of the heroic defence of Glynn Castle by the Knight of the Valley in the time of the Sugan Earl."

"True enough, Margaret; and it is well worth the telling and the hearing. It was before 'the Queen's Earl' had come over from England, that the Lord President, in his march through the Desmond country, sat down before the strong Castle of Glynn, finely and strongly situated, and of great importance

to the Catholic party. The Knight of the Valley, a Geraldine chief, to whom the castle belonged, peremptorily refused to surrender, for his garrison was well provided with stores of every kind. During the parley, the Lord President had planted his cannon, and what was the horror of the Knight when, on returning to the castle, he saw his young son, whom he had some time before given as a hostage, placed on a gabion as a mark for the soldiers of the garrison. The father, shocked and amazed, sent to expostulate with the English commander on the wanton cruelty of thus exposing the child's life. He received for answer, that unless he gave up the castle at once, not only would his son be sacrificed, but his own head should be hoisted on its highest point before two days went by. Hearing this, the brave constable of the castle sent word to the Lord President that the Knight of the Valley might have other sons, but that Glynn Castle the English should never have while he had a man to defend its walls. The siege commenced, and for twenty-four hours a continual fire was kept up on the noble fortress, without effect. At length a breach was effected in the wall of the cellar, under the hall-door (placed high above the ground, as was the custom in those stormy times), a large party of the English made their way, one at a time, up the narrow stone stairs which led to the battlements between the outer and inner doors of the castle. Step by step the staircase was defended, and several English soldiers perished before the top was

gained On the roof and battlements the fight was renewed, and so fiercely carried on that the gutter running along the edge of the roof was filled with blood. Even when the garrison were overwhelmed by numbers, many of them leaped from the ramparts into the moat below, and so perished rather than submit to the English. At last the Knight of the Valley was taken, and, as the Lord President had promised, his dissevered head was placed on the point of a spear over the highest tower, in sight of all the country round."

"Yet these are the people," said Margaret, her cheek glowing with pride and indignation, "these are the people who are said to have 'fought better abroad than at home.' Shame on the foul-mouthed calumniator of a brave but unfortunate people!"

"What an enthusiast you are, *ma belle Marguerite!*" I said, smiling. "I can almost envy you that fervid Celtic nature of yours, that loves and hates so strongly, and feels everything so intensely."

"I am not so sure that it is an enviable quality," Margaret said, in the same tone; "but, Uncle, there is one more little story I want you to tell before we say good-bye to the Geraldines. I mean the story of Lady Offaly, how bravely she defended her castle. Even though the lady was a Protestant, and that it was against the Catholic army she held out, she proved herself so true a Geraldine in spirit that she is worthy of honorable mention when the deeds of the old Geraldines are being told."

"I quite agree with you, Margaret," said her uncle. "I have always admired the character of that same Lady Offaly, notwithstanding that my sympathies, as a Catholic, are with the brave and persecuted men who, in demanding the surrender of her strong castle, merely wished to prevent it from being made an English garrison. This distinguished lady, Letitia, baroness of Offaly in her own right, was granddaughter to Gerald, the eleventh and first Protestant Earl of Kildare, with whose romantic adventures I have already made you acquainted. She was brought up a strict Protestant, and married a Protestant gentleman, Sir Robert Digby, who died after several years, leaving her a widow with seven children. Her Castle of Geashill was, in 1642, surrounded by a portion of the Catholic army, commanded by Lewis, Lord Clanmalier, and his brother, Henry Dempsey. A proposal was made to her ladyship, couched in the most respectful terms, to give up the castle to the confederate Catholics, 'on a fair compensation,' she and all her family and people to be escorted in safety to whatever place she chose to appoint. To this proposal her ladyship replied that she had always lived amongst them as a neighbor on friendly terms, and knew of no reason why they should seek to deprive her of her own dwelling, requesting the chiefs to retire, and leave her and her family in peace. An answer came back from Lord Clanmalier that, however much he and his officers regretted the necessity of disturbing her ladyship, the possession of Geashill

Castle was actually necessary to the Catholic army, and that they must have it on any terms. Then Lady Offaly sent back word that, lone woman as she was, she was well prepared to defend her castle, and would defend it against all odds.* Now the Catholic army had, as yet, but little or no artillery, and Geashill Castle being one of great strength, no progress could be made in the siege till some pieces were procured—manufactured, it is said, from household iron utensils by ‘an Irishman from Athboy. Various devices had been tried and failed, and even after the improvised artillery was brought to bear on the castle, and its walls had sustained some damage, and when the little garrison began to be much straitened for provisions, the proud old *châtelaine* of Geashill refused to yield, saying that she and hers would perish under the ruins of her father’s house rather than yield it up. Notwithstanding her advanced age, she was seen day and night on the walls, scarcely allowing herself time to rest, encouraging and animating her men to hold out till relief came, promising that come it would. And come it did at last, but not till October of that year, when, after a siege of six months, the castle was relieved by Sir Richard Grenville and Sir Charles Coote, of infamous memory. Lady Offaly then retired to her late husband’s English estate, and Geashill was garrisoned by the Parliamentary troops.

* The reader may find the correspondence that passed on this occasion between Lady Offaly and Lord Clanmalier in the Appendix. It will well repay a perusal.

"From that period down there is little romance in the prosperous career of the modern Geraldines. In the year 1766 James, the XXth Earl of Kildare, was made Duke of Leinster. Amongst the numerous progeny of this distinguished gentleman was one son, whose name is deservedly dear to the Irish people. You may guess who I mean—*Lord Edward Fitzgerald*—the only one of his race who had for ages made common cause with the country. The story of his ardent devotion to Ireland, and his death in Newgate prison in Dublin, resulting from wounds received during his capture by Major Sirr, are of such recent occurrence that you must be already acquainted with them. There is one remarkable incident, however, connected with the life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald that may, perhaps, be new to you. One of Lord Edward's younger brothers, Lord Robert Fitzgerald, being in the diplomatic service, and Minister to Denmark in the memorable year of 1798, offered his brother, then under the ban of British law, an asylum in the British Embassy at Copenhagen. With that high sense of honor characteristic of his race, Lord Robert, at the same time, tendered his resignation to George III., then the reigning monarch. On learning the cause of the resignation, however, the King, much to his credit, refused to accept it, saying that 'a good brother could not be a bad minister.'[†]

[†] This incident is related by the present Marquis of Kildare, in his very useful and interesting work entitled "*The Earls of Kildare*."

"With the gallant and patriotic Lord Edward I will end my stories of the Geraldines, Mr. Howard! I must tell you, however, before I dismiss the subject, that as the Earl of Desmond is supposed, by the Munster peasantry, to be enchanted in a cave under Lough Gur Castle, and to be visible every seven years to the eyes of mortal men, so there is a tradition amongst the Leinster people, and especially those of Kildare, that once in seven years 'the Earl of Kildare' is seen riding over the Curragh on a white horse, shod with silver, bearing a golden cup in his hand, and that when he is seen without his shadowy cup, his race is about to become extinct."

I thanked Mr. Fitzgerald for the very great pleasure his stories of the Geraldines had afforded me. "And, by the way, Uncle Maurice," I said, with a glance at Margaret which made her cheek glow, "it is rather remarkable that just as you have brought your family legends to a close, the name of Fitzgerald should, in one very particular instance, be merged in another purely English."

"It is really a striking coincidence," said the old gentleman, smiling. "What do you think of it, Margaret?"

"Nothing in particular, uncle," said Margaret, with perfect composure. "I have not an idea in my head, I am so sleepy. Aunt Ella, shall we retire?"

Her aunt smiled assent, and, bidding us good-night, they both withdrew.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE days that intervened between that and the day of days for me, were too full of tranquil joy and happiness, too bright with hope to be lightly exposed to stranger eyes. Looking back on them now through the haze of years, I can see in all my past life no days of purer, more serene happiness. In my new relations with Margaret, in the sweet consciousness of being loved by her, I found an inexhaustible spring of delight. There was something so piquant, so coy, and yet so frank and ingenuous in Margaret's bearing towards me, that I continually found some new attraction. Moreover, as her character unfolded itself to my view, each passing day discovered some fine quality unknown before. She had written for a Miss Chester, a school-friend, who was to act as bridesmaid. She came, a pale fair girl with a rather pensive expression of face, and soft dark eyes with that look of dreamy languor which were a apt to associate with more southern climes. This, Margaret told me, was owing to the fact that her mother was a Kerry woman, in whose veins ran the hot blood of the old Iberian race. Nothing could be more unlike than the characters of Margaret Fitzgerald and Georgina Chester, yet I soon found that the same strong principles, the same lofty sense of duty, the

same earnest and enlightened piety governed both in word and action. Then Georgina's being the weaker nature, clung, as it were, to Margaret's firmer and more energetic character, and twined around her in tender fond affection like the misletoe round the oak. The gentle girl looked up to Margaret, and Margaret looked down to her with a sort of protective fondness which dated from their school-days, when the bright fearless daughter of the Geraldines was wont to shield the timid, shrinking, little Georgie from the boisterous mirth and pungent sarcasms of their young companions.

After Georgina's arrival I enjoyed a new pleasure. I had more of Margaret's society, for now that she had a companion of her own age and sex we three used to walk out together in the bright mornings and calm grey evenings of lovely May. The old people seemed to prefer a quiet stroll by themselves within easy reach of the house, sometimes a walk in the garden. It might have appeared strange that the brighter prospects opening before them did not by any means increase their cheerfulness; both one and the other were more depressed than I had ever seen them. The reason was plain to me. No amount of ease or affluence could reconcile them to the thoughts of losing their old home; the home of their youth, and their youth's friends. This thought it was that saddened their hearts, and embittered even the cup of joy. And for me, although I saw their secret trouble, and deeply sympathized with their natural feelings

of sorrow on losing at once Margaret and Kilorgan, yet still having no special consolation to offer, I could only pass it over in silence, affecting not to notice what was beyond my power to amend.

Even Margaret, though taking no pains to conceal how happy she felt, was at times subdued almost to melancholy by the same saddening thought. But for her, whose hopes were bright, whose heart was opening to new and sweet influences, it was an easier task to overcome the sorrow of leaving for ever her childhood's home. All these things I could only guess at, for none of the family spoke to me, any more than I to them, on the subject I saw so near their hearts.

Margaret asked me one day was I not going to have "any groomsman?" And she blushed and smiled.

"Of course I am!—What would you think of my cousin Edmund?"

"What! the owner of Kilorgan!" she said with a start.

"Yes!—should you not wish to make his acquaintance at such a propitious time?"

"I see no reason why I should *not* wish to make his acquaintance.—As well now as again."

"Very well! that point is settled."

"What point, pray?"

"Why, that the owner of Kilorgan is to be at the wedding."

"A droll conceit, is it not? Inviting a gentleman

to his own house!—Edward Howard, I can conceive nothing cooler than that—can you, Georgina?" Margaret laughed merrily, and I laughed, too, while Miss Chester looked from one to the other in a pretty state of bewilderment.

"I see you are puzzled, Georgie," said my bride-elect, "I forgot that you did not know about Mr. Howard's cousin being our present landlord."

She then told her the whole affair, including a somewhat ludicrous sketch of her first meeting with myself.

"I wish you had seen him, Georgie dear," said the arch girl, "when I came to his relief. You know what a faithful old fellow Bran is;—well, having discovered his worship here prowling around the premises, he evidently regarded him as a suspicious character,—only fancy, Georgie! how the blood of the Howards must have boiled at the very idea!"

"Oh dear! Margaret, how can you talk so?" said timid Georgina, in a deprecating tone.

"Never mind, Miss Chester," I said laughing, "I shall pay her off some day, this is her day of power. Will your queenship deign to finish that fancy sketch of yours? But pray do not make the caricature too broad;—if you do I may be tempted to tell about a certain floral sketch I once saw under peculiar circumstances in a fair lady's drawing-book."

"You may tell what you please, Mr. Edward Howard," said Margaret with careless gaiety, "I will paint my sketch in what colors I please. So as I was telling

you, Georgie, Bran opened his great mouth and barked furiously, whereupon our friend stood still, looking very much frightened."

"Frightened, Margaret!"

"Well, you cannot deny that you were much relieved, when I came to your rescue!"

"Relieved! yes, and no little amused, when I had time to look at you. Do you know who *you* reminded *me* of, Dame Margaret?"

"Of course not, but I am curious to hear."

"Well! you looked exactly like the little woman that 'went to the market her eggs for to sell.'"

"Or Goody Two Shoes!"

Even Georgina's gravity was not proof against this, and the two laughed heartily at the idea.

"But tell me, then," said Margaret, wiping her eyes, "how did you come to—to—" she blushed and hesitated.

"How did I come to fall in love with the lady in the plaid shawl and cottage bonnet?—Now that is just what I mean to keep to myself. Margaret," I added, with real feeling, "were I even inclined to do so, I could not tell you when or how I began to love you. Nor shall I try to tell you *why* I was attracted towards you; for I scarcely think I could."

"Then do not try," said Margaret standing up and laying her hand on my shoulder as I sat, "the heart has its mysteries, Edward, and I would not, if I could, penetrate yours. I am satisfied to know that

I have a corner in it," she said, resuming her usual manner.

"A corner in it!" I said reproachfully. Our eyes met for a moment, then she blushed and turning to her friend, who sat looking out of the window, asked if she would not like to go to Limerick. "I am going a-shopping to-day," said she, "and I have accepted the offer of Mrs. Brereton's phaeton."

Georgina was delighted, and ran off to prepare.

"May I be of the party?" I said, when the door closed after Miss Chester.

"No, indeed, you must stay and keep Uncle Maurice and Aunt Ella company. We don't want you with us to-day."

"As your queenship pleases. But what time will you be home?"

"Before tea-time, at all events."

"What a lonely day I shall have of it, Margaret!"

"Will you miss me, then, so very much?" There was a flush of joy on Margaret's cheek, and a thrilling tone was in her voice as she said these words that stirred my inmost soul. What I answered I know not now, and it were of little importance to the reader if I did.

When the young ladies were gone, I walked out with Uncle Maurice and Aunt Ella, then we had a very quiet lunch, and spent the long afternoon in the garden. How my heart leaped, when the sound of carriage wheels coming up the avenue announced Margaret's return!—We dined late that day, and a

pleasant gossiping meal it was, the young ladies had so much to tell about what and who they had seen in the city.

Our evenings were divided between music and conversation. The moon was at her full, and after she had risen, we used to sit out of doors and sing and chat and watch the sheen of the streamlet flowing down the valley, and the moon-beams glimmering through the tall trees, making a silvery trace on the sward beneath.

Then we had occasional excursions during the day, in which we were joined by the Brereton family consisting of the old lady herself and daughter of a certain age, Adelaide by name, also a son, a young widower who, I soon discovered, would fain have given Margaret the vacant place in his home and heart. Indeed, I was told confidentially by Aunt Ella, that Margaret might have been Mrs. Henry Brereton in the first place, but somehow, Miss Fitzgerald added, although Harry was a fine young fellow, on the whole, there was too much of the country squire about him for Margaret's fastidious taste. But whatever else Brereton might have been, he was undoubtedly generous and good natured, for, notwithstanding my being Margaret's favored suitor, he and I were on sufficiently good terms. We rode out together, and went shooting or fishing together some part of almost every day.

At length came the day before that appointed for the wedding, and just as we were sitting down to

dinner—for we dined late since Miss Chester's arrival—little Peter ran in to say, that a carriage was driving up the avenue. "Ah! it is my cousin!" said I, "he promised to be here to-day, at the farthest."

I could see that the Fitzgerald family were all more or less agitated by the news of my cousin's arrival. It is true they had been expecting him, but it was very different now, that he was there. Uncle Maurice, with his punctilious politeness, accompanied me to the door to meet our visitor, and there was not a trace of discomposure in his face or manner as he bowed and shook hands with my cousin and welcomed him to Kilorgan.

There was the slightest degree of coolness and reserve in Margaret's reception of the visitor; even her aunt could, at first, be barely civil, but by the time dinner was over, the genial hospitality of the family had resumed its graceful flow, and the remembrance of my cousin's kindness in allowing them to remain so long in the house, appeared to be uppermost in their minds.

During the evening Mr. Fitzgerald took the opportunity of thanking his guest for the very great kindness he had shewn the family, and expressed his hope that his new purchase might prove a good investment for him.

"This affair once over," said he, smiling, "I will show you what we have been doing this Spring, and I hope it will meet your approval."

"I have not the slightest doubt of it, Mr. Fitzger-

ald!" said my cousin, with a gravity which amused me, it was so little characteristic of him. "I have entire confidence in your agricultural skill and general management of the property."

Uncle Maurice bowed to the compliment, and I saw that my cousin had already made a friend.

That evening our little party received an agreeable addition. Father Fitzpatrick, the good old parish priest, rode over with his curate, Father Delany, to see, as he said, whether "the other Mr. Howard" had arrived. What a pleasant evening that was! Nothing more kind, more genial in social moments, than your genuine Irish priest, and nothing more really dignified or impressive. The younger clergyman was of the new school, an alumnus of Dr. Doyle's College at Carlow, a man of reading and of culture, who had written more than one article for the *Dublin Review*, and was as familiar with Louis Veuillot and Montalembert and Brownson as he was with Cornelius a Lapide or St. Thomas Aquinas. Poetry he knew too, had Moore and Goldsmith at his fingers' ends, and Davis, and Mangan, and McGee, and the other poets of the Young Ireland school. He was really an accomplished young priest, and one that might have graced the literary *salons* of Paris. But it was amusing to note the difference between him and his worthy senior. The latter belonged, in all his ways, to the old school, and with much of the polish of the French and Spanish-bred priests of the generations just gone by, and a priestly dignity that commanded respect, he was no

lover of literature, that is to say of modern literature. His opinion was, that if a priest were well acquainted with the Fathers and the schoolmen, and with Holy Writ, nothing more was wanting. The Greek and Latin classics he cheerfully tolerated, but as for the English, or French, or any other modern classics, good old Father Fitzpatrick thought the study of them was so much lost time, especially for a priest. His bearing towards his younger *confrère* was that of a father; he was, on the whole, proud of his curate, although he did indulge once in a while in some good-natured raillery at his expense in regard to his fondness for the poets. But their relations were of the kindest and friendliest, and it was quite evident that they much enjoyed each other's society.

Father Delany, amongst his other accomplishments, was quite of a musical turn, and sang a good song when occasion offered. On that particular evening he treated us, at Aunt Ella's request, to "Auld Lang Syne," and "The Minstrel Boy," both of which he sang with correct taste and feeling. Pretty Georgina sang, to please Margaret, a favorite song of hers—" *Spirito Gentile*," from "*La Favorita*," and so sweetly she sang, that even those of the company who did not understand the soft Italian words, felt the full pathos of the exquisite strain.

Margaret we could not prevail upon to sing; she owned to me as we stood a few moments together at one of the windows, that she never was in less humor of singing.

"Are you sorry, then, Margaret, that to-morrow is our wedding-day?"

"Sorry!" she repeated with sudden animation, "sorry that before to-morrow's sun sets I shall be your wife!—Oh Edward! how can you think so?"

"Why, then, should you feel so depressed as you say you do?"

"That I cannot tell you—except it be the anticipated weight of the new cares, new responsibilities that will come with my new state. The shadows of the future fall darkly and coldly over the happiest wedding-day. At least, I think so."

"Do you doubt my power or will to make you happy?"

"Neither one nor the other, Edward," said Margaret in a tremulous voice; "but as you are not the arbiter of my fate, and cannot control the future any more than I can myself, the mists of uncertainty still veil the coming time—the clouds and the shadows that may darken our life are far above your head and mine. But, after all," she added brightening up, "we must only take the future as it comes, and leave all to God. So long as we do that, and have faith in each other, all *must* go well."

She moved away, and the next moment I saw her chatting with Father Fitzpatrick as gaily as though no shadow had ever rested on her heart or brow.

When the long pleasant evening was at length closed, the priests gone, and the inmates of the house about retiring for the night, I held Margaret's hand a

moment when she bade me a smiling "good night" while I whispered one word; it was but one, yet it brought the warm blood to her cheek—it was "Tomorrow!" With downcast eyes and modest grace, she hurried after her young companion.

Next day the sun rose in unclouded majesty, It was one of the last days of May. The first object that met my eyes when I descended to the parlor, was a little temporary altar prepared for the celebration of Mass, and on it, with the Crucifix, was a small statue of the Blessed Virgin, between two vases filled with early flowers, on whose delicate petals the dew-drops still hung. My heart beat faster at the sight, for I knew it was before that altar that Margaret was to pledge her faith to me, under the gracious auspices of Mary the ever blessed.

In order to pass the time till the appointed hour, I took a turn in the garden, where I was soon joined by my cousin and Mr. Fitzgerald. When we returned to the house, we found Father Fitzpatrick in the parlor, and the Breretons soon after arrived. By and bye there was heard a rustle of silk on the stairs, and Georgina Chester made her appearance, then Aunt Ella, looking very pale and sad, but very calm and stately, in a brown silk dress, with collar and cuffs of antique lace, and Margaret, my own Margaret, on whose arm she leaned, attired in a gray travelling dress that well became her. The arrangement was, that immediately after the ceremony, and breakfast, we were to start for England, accompanied by Miss

Chester and my cousin, and that Mr. and Miss Fitzgerald were to go home with the Breretons to spend some weeks. After that, I was to come back for them, as they were to live with us in Surrey.

Margaret was paler than I had ever seen her, and looked as though she could scarce restrain her tears. Yet how her sweet face lit up when, returning our morning salutations, her eyes met mine.

The priest put on his robes. Mass was said, the marriage rites were over, and Margaret Fitzgerald was Margaret Howard, my wedded wife. With a blushing, womanly grace she received the compliments of her friends, then retired a few moments with her aunt and Georgina. They had no sooner returned to the parlor—Margaret's eyes and Miss Fitzgerald's still red with the tears they had been shedding,—than breakfast was announced by Mrs Brereton's portly butler, who, with the cook from Brereton Park, had come to officiate that day at Kilorgan.

During breakfast there was a strange mixture of joy and sorrow around the table. There was the joy of hope fulfilled, and bright dreams realized, which was mine and, I think, Margaret's; there was the joy of witnessing the happiness of friends near and dear which was that of all present; but there was sorrow, too, plainly written on the frank, handsome face of Harry Brereton, and on the troubled brow of Uncle Maurice and Aunt Ella. To them the joy of knowing Margaret happy was clouded over by the thought that she could be to them no more what she had been.

Breakfast over, and the moment of departure come, our little company being all assembled in the parlor, and the carriage at the door, Margaret's eyes filled with tears as she looked around.

"I have not only to bid farewell," said she, "to my more than parents, but to the home of my childhood, and forever. You, too, dear Uncle Maurice and Aunt Ella, you, too, must leave Kilorgan, the quiet nest that I hoped would shelter your declining years."

"And it will shelter them still," I said, very quietly.

"No, no," said Margaret, in a dejected tone; "they have no right to expect any such favor from your cousin,—nor would they accept it if it were offered. As it is, we have trespassed too long on the kind indulgence of Mr. Edmund Howard, the present owner of Kilorgan."

My cousin smiled, and so did I. "Allow me to correct two trifling mistakes," said I, "into which you have fallen, my sweet wife! In the first place, there is no such person as 'Mr. Edmund Howard'—and in the next place, you, Margaret Howard, late Fitzgerald, are the true and only proprietor of Kilorgan."

Exclamations of surprise were heard on every side. Aunt Ella sank into a chair. Margaret stood looking at me in utter amazement.

"The true and only owner of Kilorgan!—What do you mean, Edward?"

Why, I mean that you are still the heiress of Kilorgan. Is not that very simple?"

"And your cousin?"

"My cousin," I said laughing, "has just as much claim to the ownership of Kilorgan as he has to the name of Howard. Let me now introduce him under his proper name—Captain Frederick Cavendish, of the Coldstream Guards, my cousin and friend, though no Howard."

"Then who bought the property—or was it sold?"

"It was sold, and I was the purchaser: The mistake made by the newspapers you saw here, in changing my name Edward E. Howard to *Edmund E. Howard*,—which, you see, was all the difference,—gave me the opportunity of enjoying a most delightful visit, and further cultivating your acquaintance, without being recognized as the purchaser of the estate."

"But how could you keep up the deception so long?" said Margaret, in a voice scarcely audible.

"You may blame yourself for that, lady mine! I saw it was my only chance of winning your heart and hand, and that I was determined to do at any cost. I had not been many days at Kilorgan, let me tell you, when I wrote to my lawyer in Dublin to have the deed of purchase made out in the name of *the late owner, Margaret Fitzgerald*. So that your title is now as good as it ever was."

"Oh, Edward!" sobbed my bride,—it was all she could say.

"You forgive me, then, Margaret?" I said, after a moment's silence. "Well! now that you are not leaving your old home forever, and are only parting with your uncle and aunt for a short time, you can afford to smile on us all, can you not?" She raised her head and looked at me with that bright smile which had first won my heart. "That is my own Margaret. Now before we go I want you to sign a paper."

"What paper, Edward?"

"Read it!" and taking it from my pocket I placed it in her hand.

Margaret glanced over the lines, half printed, half written, then looked at me with a radiant smile, and walking to the table, signed the document. She then handed it to her uncle saying—

"There, Uncle Maurice, take that deed—it makes you and Aunt Ella the joint owners of Kilorgan. Now, I can cheerfully leave you for a while, hoping soon to revisit Kilorgan and you. I presume you will not go to England now," she added with her usual archness.

"No, Margaret," said her uncle, "we are only too happy to remain in the dear old home your generous husband has restored to us. Are we not, Ellice?"

"Indeed, brother, we are," said the gentle Ella, joy and sorrow struggling for the mastery on her speaking face.

"Here we shall live and die, and pray for our noble

benefactor—the worthy husband of our darling child.”

“Now, then. Edward! I am yours—yours for ever,” said Margaret placing her hand in mine. “I can go now with a light heart, hoping to meet all my dear kind friends again.”

Uncle Maurice grasped her hand and shook it in silence; tears were in his eyes, but he could not articulate a word.

As I touched Aunt Ella's forehead with my lips, she whispered: “I know you will make her happy, Mr. Howard! that is my comfort!”

“God bless you, my young friend! God bless you!” said Father Fitzpatrick; as we shook hands—“You have proved yourself a true Howard!”

At the door we found Sheelah and Peter, both crying as though their hearts would break. Margaret stopped to say a kind word to each and rejoiced their hearts by telling them, that they should soon see her again; that Kilorgan now belonged to her uncle and aunt, and that they were both to remain with the family.

• • • • •

It is needless to say that the jealousy of my aunt and sisters, on account of poor Nina, was soon overcome by Margaret's winning sweetness. They were charmed with my Irish wife, and she, in turn, soon learned to love them. In Clara and Bertha she found sisters, and if my stately aunt, with her En-

glish coldness and reserve, did not at first inspire her with affection, she loved and esteemed her all the more when once the ice thawed off, and she saw the many noble virtues that marked her character. When a few months after we visited Ireland and Kilorgan, my aunt and my sisters came with us, and when we returned to our home in fair and fertile Surrey, we prevailed on Uncle Maurice and Aunt Ella to go with us for a long visit.

My young readers will not be sorry to hear that in less than a year after this auspicious event Georgina Chester became the wife of my cousin Frederick Cavendish, and went with him to one of our American colonies where his regiment was then stationed. Their love-match was but another proof that extremes meet, for assuredly no two could be more unlike than the gay, dashing English guardsman and the soft, languid, shrinking Irish maiden. Married they were, however, and I have every reason to think that the union was a happy one.

The last thing Cavendish said to me as we parted on the deck of the vessel that was to convey him and his dark-eyed Georgina to the New World was this: "Ned, my boy, it was a happy day for us all when you first saw 'THE HEIRESS OF KILORGAN.'"

APPENDIX.

POPE GREGORY'S LETTER.

TO THE IRISH CATHOLICS.

Greg XIII. to the Archbishops, Bishops, and other Prelates, as also to the Catholic Princes, Earls, Barons, Clergy, nobles, and people of Ireland, health, and apostolical benediction.

“ A few years ago, we admonished you, through our letters, when you took up arms to defend your liberties and rights, under the leadership of James Geraldine, of happy memory, that we would ever be ready to assist you against those English heretics who have deserted the holy church of Rome. Praiseworthy throughout all time must his exertions be in thus endeavouring to cast off the hard yoke which the English have imposed upon you. Strenuously did we exhort him to prompt and fearless action, and in order more efficaciously to move him thereto, we conceded to all those who contritely confessed their sins, pardon and remission, provided they enrolled themselves under the banners of the aforesaid James, the champion and defender of the Catholic faith, or aided him by counsel, provisions, or other things necessary for the sustentation of his army. This indulgence is the same as that which was imparted to those who fought against the Turk for the recovery of the Holy Land. But, lately have we learned, with the profoundest sorrow, that James fell in battle, stoutly fighting for the faith. John Geraldine has succeeded him, and has already given heroic proof of his devotion to the Catholic religion: We, therefore, exhort each and every of you to pay the most implicit obedience to

him, and that you study to aid John, as you would have aided the aforesaid James, if he were living. We, therefore, impart to each and every of you the same indulgence, provided you shall have first confessed and communicated, and adhered by every means in your power to the general-in-chief, John, and in case of his demise, which God avert, to James. We, therefore, decree, that the power of obtaining this indulgence shall last as long as the aforesaid John and James shall live.

“Given at Rome, die Maii xlii., M.D.LXXX. Pontificatus nostri, anno octavo.”

The Earl of Desmond's Address to his Soldiers.

“Brave and generous friends, you all have lived to witness the ruin which has come upon our country—you have seen desolation lowering, and listened to the tempest which has wasted it far and wide. In the days of old the kings of England cherished the nobility of this land, bestowing on them splendid possessions, and consulting with them on the concerns of the state. They did more—they sought to conciliate the other orders, by ruling them equitably, and avoiding oppression. You know that by justice kingdoms are made eternal, and that every social structure based on tyranny must fall and crumble. The sovereign who rules according to justice is regarded as the common parent, and cheerfully is he obeyed; but the tyrant throughout all time must be abhorred, though fear may counsel men to dissemble it. But our rulers, ever since they renounced the Catholic religion, scorned to regard the nobles of this land who have remained true to their faith; they have no part in the council of the realm—nay, they are treated with ignominy. As for the people—are they not harassed, and ground down by such imposts as our ancestors never knew? Spies and informers are sent amongst them, and the misrepresentations of those hirelings are the ground on which Queen Elizabeth has formed her notions of the Irish people. Fore Heaven we are trampled on by a gang of mailed marauders, who hold us in contempt. Look

to the sacred order of our priesthood—is it not despised by those innovators who have come amongst us to plunder and banish the rightful owners from their time-hallowed possessions? In the days of old the kings who ruled this land were wont to select twelve representatives out of the first order of nobility—nor was there any enactment made touching the freedom of the subject and the commonweal, without their vote and approbation; but you are witnesses here to-day of the degeneracy into which we have fallen—privileges are overlooked—rights are despised, and liberty is a mere catch-word—the military command is committed to adventurers—the civil administration is in the hands of spies, hirelings, and defamers; but what is most deplorable of all, we are denied the right of practising and professing our religion openly. Heresy is making rapid encroachments, and we are called upon to do homage to those base-born churls who, in the queen's name, mock and spurn us. To such men we must submit our lives, liberties, and fortunes—the property which our fathers have handed down to us is no longer secure—nay, as I said before, our very lives are at the disposal of the perjurer and the robber. Can you who have been born and reared in liberty subject yourselves to such a state? I know that you cannot; and 'tis to remedy this deplorable condition of our country that we have taken up arms. A desperate cancer must be cut out, even with the knife—petitions, remonstrances, supplications, all have failed. See, then, the only means left for redress—the sword. Nature dictates this step—justice nerves our arms—necessity compels us to take it. The greater part of the nobility of this land will ultimately co-operate with us; for, although they may apparently differ with us, believe me, that with the exception of Ormond, and a few others, who are deluded by the queen, the rest of them are even now praying the God of Hosts to bless and prosper our arms. Come, then, let us rally round our altars and hearths, and shame upon the man who would barter honour and liberty for serfdom and disgrace.”

Correspondence between Lady Offaly, Lord Clanmalier and others.

Geashill had in earlier times belonged to the O'Dempseys; and we find the name of four Dempseys among those who subscribed to the summons which the baroness first received from the rebels. On this occasion, Henry Dempsey, brother to the lord Clanmalier, with others of the same family, opened their proceedings with the following paper, of which the intent demands no explanation.

"We, his majesty's loyal subjects, at the present employed in his highness' service, for the sacking of your castle, you are therefore to deliver unto us the free possession of your said castle, promising faithfully that your ladyship, together with the rest within your said castle *resiant*, shall have a reasonable composition; otherwise, upon the non-yielding of the castle, we do assure you that we will buru the whole town, kill all the Protestants, and spare neither man, woman nor child, upon taking the castle by compulsion. Consider, madam, of this our offer, impute not the blame of your own folly unto us. Think not that here we brag. Your ladyship, upon submission, shall have safe convoy to secure you from the hands of your enemies and to lead you whither you please. A speedy reply is desired with all expedition, and then we surcease.

"Henry Dempsey; Charles Dempsey; Andrew Fitz-Patrick; Conn Dempsey; Phelim Dempsey; James McDonnell; John Vickers."

To this summons, she returned this answer:—"I received your letter, wherein you threaten to sack this my castle by his majesty's authority. I have ever been a loyal subject, and a good neighbour among you, and therefore cannot but wonder at such an assault. I thank you for your offer of a convoy, wherein I hold little safety; and therefore my resolution is, that being free from offending his majesty, or doing wrong to any of you, I will live and die innocently, I will do the best to defend my own, leaving the issue to God; and though I have been. I

still am desirous to avoid the shedding of Christian blood, yet being provoked, your threats shall no whit dismay me."

"After two months," (writes Archdall,) "the lord viscount Clanmalier brought a great piece of ordnance, and sent another summons to her ladyship in these words:—

"Noble Madam, It was never my intention to offer you any injury, before you were pleased to begin with me, for it is well known, if I were so disposed, you had not been by this time at Geashill; so as I find you are not sensible of the courtesies I have always expressed unto you, since the beginning of this commotion; however, I did not thirst for revenge, but out of my loving and wonted respects still towards you, I am pleased and desirous to give you fair quarter, if you please to accept thereof, both for yourself, children and grandchildren, and likewise for your goods; and I will undertake to send a safe convoy with you and them either to Dublin, or to any other of the next adjoining garrisons, either of which to be at your own election; and if you be not pleased to accept of this offer, I hope you will not impute the blame unto me, if you be not fairly dealt withal, for I expect to have the command of your house before I stir from hence; and if you please to send any of your gentlemen of your house to me, I am desirous to confer thereof at large. And so expecting your speedy answer, I rest your loving cousin.

"LEWIS GLANMALIERON.

"P.S. Madam, there are other gentlemen now in this town, whose names are hereunto subscribed, who do join and unite themselves in mine offer unto you,

"Lewis Glanmaleroe, Art O'Molloy, Henry Dempsie, Edward Connor, Charles Connor, Daniel Doyne, John MacWilliam."

To this letter, lady Ophaly sent the following answer:—

"My Lord,—I little expected such a salute from a kinsman whom I have ever respected, you being not ignorant of the great damages I have received from your followers of Glenma-

leroe, so as you can't but know in your own conscience, that I am innocent of doing you any injury, unless you count it an injury for my people to bring back a small quantity of mine own goods where they found them, and with them, some others of such men as have done me all the injury they can devise, as may appear by their own letter. I was offered a convoy by those that formerly beseiged me, I hope you have more honour than to follow their example, by seeking her ruin that never wronged you. However, I am still of the same mind, and can think no place safer than my own house, wherein if I perish by your means, the guilt will light on you, and I doubt not but I shall receive a crown of martyrdom dying innocently. God, I trust, will take a poor widow into his protection from all those which without cause are risen up against me,

“Your poor kinswoman,

“LETTICE OPHALEY.

“P.S. If the conference you desire do but concern the contents of this letter, I think this answer will give you full satisfaction, and I hope you will withdraw your hand, and show your power in more noble actions.”

After his lordship had received this answer, he discharged his piece of ordnance against the castle, which at first shot broke and flew in pieces; but his men continued with their muskets and other arms to fire until the evening, when they took away the broken piece of ordnance, and marched off in the night; but before their departure, his lordship sent the following letter thus directed:—

“To my noble cousin, the Lady Lettice, Baroness of Ophaley.

“MADAM,

“I received your letter, and am still tender of your good and welfare, though you give no credit thereunto; and whereas, you do understand by relation, that my piece of ordnance did not prosper, I believe you will be sensible of the hazard and loss you are like to sustain thereby, unless you will be better

advised to accept the kind offer which I mentioned in my letter unto you in the morning; if not, expect no further favour at my hands, and so I rest your ladyship's loving cousin,

"LEWIS GLANMALERON."

To which my lady returned answer by one of her own men who was kept prisoner.

"MY LORD,

"Your second summons I have received, and should be glad to find you tender of my good; for your piece of ordnance I never disputed how it prospered, presuming you would rather make use of it for your own defence or against enemies, than to try your strength against a poor widow of your own blood; but since you have bent it against me, let the blood which shall be shed, be required at their hands that seek it; for my part, my conscience tells me that I am innocent, and wishing you so too, I rest your cousin,

"LETTICE OPHALEY."

She was further menaced by Charles Dempsey, who wrote the following letter, with a design of sending it to her that afternoon, but being beaten out of the town, he was prevented, and it was found in one of the houses.

"MADAM,

I do admire that a lady of your worth and honour as you conceive yourself to be, should in so regardless a sort, instead of matters of conscience in your letters, use frivolous and scandalous words, expressly nominating us your enemies *Glanmaleros Kearnes*, and that, in that letter written this very day unto Sir Luke Fitzgerald desiring his assistance to the number of fifty men, which should quash and cashier us hence, he being your enemy no less than we, secluding kindred, not prophaneess of religion. Nay, your ladyship was not formerly abashed to write to William Parsons, naming us in that letter unto them, a mixt multitude. Remember yourself, madam, consisting of more women and boys than men. All

these letters before your ladyship shortly shall be produced. Both the messengers we have intercepted, together with your letters, and do detain them as yet prisoners, until such time as thereof we do certify your ladyship, which at the present we thought to do expedient. They are, therefore, censured to death, and this day is prefixed for their execution, your ladyship by your letters desires novelties. Hear then, Chidley Coote (correspondently to the intent of your letters to Parsons coming to your aid), being intercepted in the way, was deadly wounded, ten taken prisoners, his ensigns taken away. One *Alman Hamnett's* man, if he come safe with his message, (as I hope he will not), will confirm this news. Had the character of these letters of yours been either Lloyd's or Hamnett's, that politick engineer and the adviser of quilllets, (by him that bought me), no other satisfaction should be taken but their heads; though, as the case stands, *Hamnett* lives in no small danger for manifold reasons.

"CHARLES DENFORD."

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